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In These Times

INDEPENDENT NEWS & VIEWS

November 15, 1998

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Labor's Ashes

Cathy Mason
On the Pill

Scott McLemee
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Stolen Rent

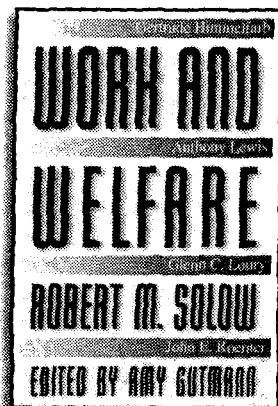
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Work and Welfare

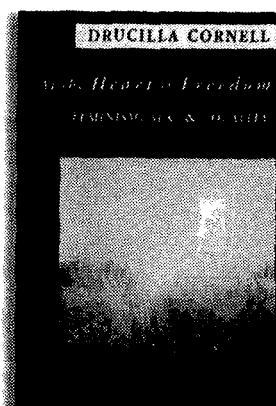
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Edited by Amy Gutmann

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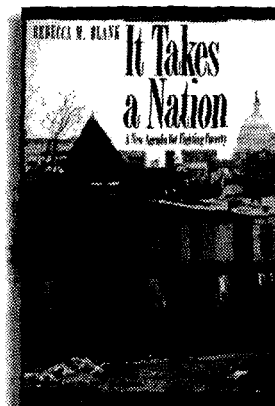
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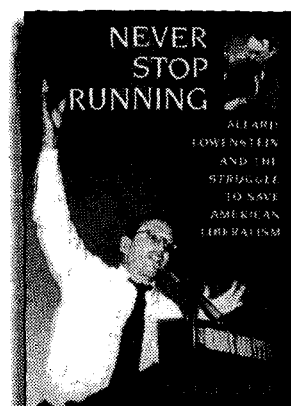
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In These Times (ISSN 0160-5992) is published biweekly by the Institute for Public Affairs, 2040 N. Milwaukee Ave., Chicago, IL 60647. (773) 772-0100.

Subscriptions are \$36.95 a year (\$59 for institutions; \$61.95 Canada; \$75.95 overseas). Call (800) 827-0270.

Periodicals postage paid at Chicago, IL and at additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to *In These Times*, 308 E. Hitt St., Mt. Morris, IL 61054. This issue (Vol. 22, No. 25) went to press on Oct. 16, for newsstand sales Nov. 2-15, 1998.

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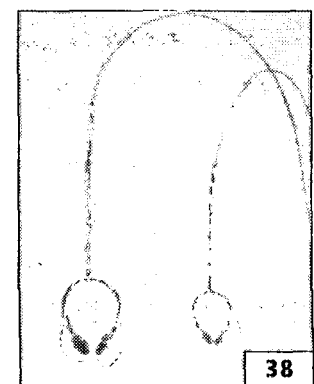
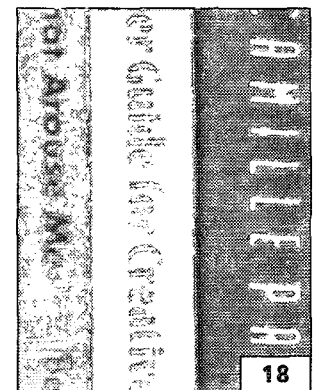
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Cover by Steve Anderson

Reclaiming Populism

I enjoyed Chris Lehmann's article about class, but found its point a little diffused by the rhetorical style ("It's Class, Stupid," October 18). If you examine the effect of the media on the population you can see that public opinion is controlled by expectations. It is not that a populist movement could not be effective, all things being equal. But, in my opinion, that is simply not allowed by the ruling classes.

I still think that we can "reign in" public discourse in a way that the point of it—a more democratic and humane world—will be met. In the vast sea of "new left" populist psychology, the historical roots and practical necessities of the Populist movement have been obscured. Let's hope we can lift the corporate veil.

Don Ballanger
Toronto

If Chris Lehmann is so anxious to avoid resuming "the class-vs.-culture battle," why does he end up asserting that "the culturalization of left discourse has played directly into the right's hand." I won't attempt, in this limited space, to rebut his arguments and characterizations. But I do want to point out that, as Studs Terkel implies in the same issue, it is ironic that the left cannot even manage to get its various fractions together for a decent talk. Instead, we continue to call each other traitors, and worse. The right is obviously better at finding pragmatic solutions to ideological and theoretical differences (between new moralists and

free marketers, for example) in the name of larger political struggles. As a card-carrying member of the "cultural left" and a long-time subscriber to *In These Times*, it saddens—no, angers—me that ITT seems to have decided that questions of culture are irrelevant to a revitalized left, as evidenced not only in the pages of the magazine but also in the program of the "Back to Basics" conference. I have, unfortunately, come to expect that from *The Nation*. I had hoped for more from ITT.

Lawrence Grossberg
Editor
Cultural Studies
Chapel Hill, N.C.

Chris Lehmann responds: The right's political success does not, as Lawrence Grossberg claims, stem from defining away its own ideological differences. Instead, the right has succeeded by doing the basic spadework necessary for political victory in any democracy: It has gathered a mass constituency—largely by deploying a populist rhetoric of class resentment. At the height of this mobilization of traditional left-liberal supporters into the ranks of the right, the culturalist left gleefully embarked on the culture wars, seeking to baptize all manner of pop effluvia, from sitcoms to rock music, in the strained image of utopian consumer resistance.

Not only has this strategy failed to yield any noticeable gains in the left's ever-thinning mass constituency in the past two decades, but it has been taken up wholesale by the ideological masters

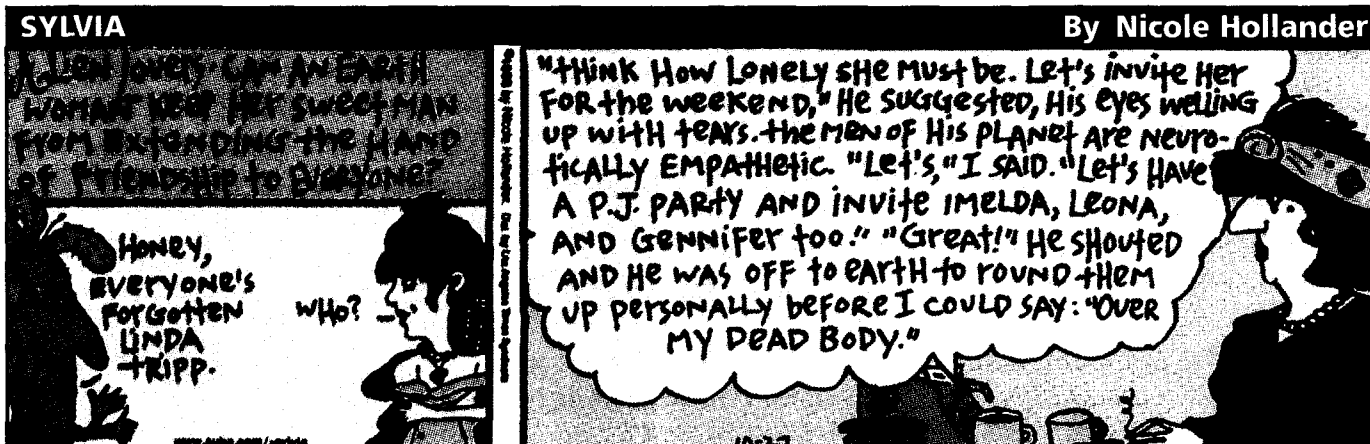
of the market. Now management consultants, advertising copywriters and TV producers enthusiastically share the culturalist left's agenda of carving up the American public into demographic subgroups, so that they can target them with marketing campaigns steeped in the cultural-studies-style rhetoric of consumer rebellion, irony and authenticity. It's small wonder that, in the face of the dismaying legacy bred by his theoretical labors, Grossberg would prefer that we simply not talk about it.

Falling Flat

With regard to Fred Weir's excellent account of Russia's collapse under Yeltsin and Chernomyrdin ("Free Fall," October 4), *In These Times* readers might also like to know that, according to the *Washington Post*, Chernomyrdin has called for a "perceptible reduction in tax rates, an across-the-board 20 percent personal income tax and a single land tax." The Russian Duma wants to raise tariff barriers, nationalize some industry and control currency outflow. Unfortunately, the IMF holds the bailout money, and, in the end, can probably dictate policy.

The imposition of a flat tax and a single land tax would only perpetuate the oligarchy, but flat taxes and currency flow are what the IMF and U.S. globalization policy are all about. One hopes the Russian people will find a way to free themselves from the tyranny of selfish men. Look out a flat tax is clearly the intent of the wealthy in the United States as well.

Bette Hurst
Damascus, Md.



Farm Aid

Transfixed by sex in the Oval Office and the resulting impeachment inquiry, the nation's talking heads are once again disconnected from the nation's body politic. Better to tune out Peter, Tom and Dan and to heed Ralph Nader. He proposes, tongue in cheek, that a national referendum be held in November that would ask voters: "Should President William Jefferson Clinton remain in office?"

Nader reasons that voters are better qualified than their representatives to decide this matter. "This is not a matter of complicated finance, technology or foreign relations," he says. "It affects the most fundamental of ethical judgments on matters of human behavior that are not unique and are quite familiar to millions of voters."

Indeed, between September 7 and October 9, the nightly newscasts at CBS, NBC and ABC devoted 31 percent of their programming to the Clinton sex scandal. Were the public allowed to decide Clinton's fate in November, we would be spared the prospect of an open-ended impeachment inquiry. What's more, the network punditry would be freed up to cover other stories. Cokie Roberts might actually do some reporting.

She might go stand in front of the Corn Palace in Mitchell, S.D., and tell the nation that corn, wheat and soybean prices have fallen 39 percent since 1995. Or perhaps, prim and blood splattered, she could report from a slaughter house that 82 percent of beef packing is controlled by four corporations, an oligopoly that contributed to last year's decision by 500 South Dakota ranchers to sell off their herds. Or, perched on a tractor at a farm auction near Bismarck, N.D., Cokie could explain that 2,000 of that state's 30,000 farms are expected to go under this year.

The economic crisis has pushed down the price of agricultural products on the international market, and America's farm communities are the first segment of society to feel the pain of the global meltdown. In other developed countries the agricultural economy is also taking a hit, but, because of agricultural subsidies, farmers there won't suffer as much. Similar subsidies were abolished in the United States in 1996 by the Republican's "Freedom to Farm" legislation, which phased out federal price supports.

The farm crisis endangers the livelihood of family farmers. Their corporate counterparts have the capital, economies of scale and corporate structures that allow them to weather the crisis—and, in some cases, profit from their neighbors' demise. By providing tax breaks to help attract capital, corporations concen-

trate farm production and land ownership. This allows them to use their tax and legal advantages to bid up land prices, flood the market with their products and drive family farmers out of business. To level the playing field, South Dakota citizens have placed a constitutional amendment on their state's November ballot that would restrict corporate farming by reserving the tax benefits and limited liability enjoyed by corporations in the state exclusively for family farmers and ranchers. If it passes, the amendment would discourage concentration and give more economic opportunities to a greater number of farm families. Whether this initiative wins or loses, the rest of us—living in urban, suburban and rural areas—can learn a lesson from South Dakota. The economic crisis is global, but some of the solutions can be local.

The public, as shown by the polls, has proven better able to judge the merits of the Clinton scandals than elected officials and television pundits. In the same way, as citizens in South Dakota are demon-

The economic crisis has pushed down the price of agricultural products on the international market, and America's farm communities are the first to feel the pain of the global meltdown.

strating, the people can make common sense decisions about their economic environment, shaping it to their own needs rather than the interests of multinational conglomerates and their paid spokesmen in Congress. Opponents of the South Dakota amendment charge that it's unfair "protectionism." To us, it looks more like democracy.

• • • • •

In this issue, Doug Ireland reports on the prospects of the Working Families Party in New York. The organizers of this fusion-style, community-labor coalition argue that the most important vote any New York progressive can cast this November is for a centrist Democrat from the Queens machine. Democrat Peter Vallone—who is mounting a nearly hopeless challenge against incumbent Republican Gov. George Pataki—may be a hack, but 50,000 votes for him on the Working Families Party ballot line would give the group automatic ballot status in future elections. The Working Families Party could be a serious vehicle for progressive politics. As Ireland writes, this is a unique opportunity to "snatch a progressive victory from the jaws of a Democratic defeat." J.B.

U.N. Official Resigns over Iraqi Sanctions

By Craig Aaron

Denis Halliday had seen enough. A 34-year veteran of the United Nations, Halliday, 57, resigned from his post as U.N. Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq in late September to protest the continuation of economic sanctions against the country, which have been in place since 1990. Halliday, who is from Ireland, was in charge of the U.N. "oil-for-food" program, which allowed Iraq to sell \$2 billion worth of oil every six months to purchase basic foods and medicine for more than 20 million people. Following his appointment in August 1997, Halliday became an outspoken critic of sanctions and succeeded in convincing the Security Council to double the size of the oil-for-food program last February. But after witnessing little change in the widespread malnutrition, mortality and social decay that afflicts the country, he stepped down. Halliday spoke with *In These Times* from New York.

In These Times: Why did you resign from your post?

Denis Halliday: The conditions in Iraq are appalling. Malnutrition is running at about 30 percent for children under 5 years old. In terms of mortality, probably 5 or 6 thousand children are dying per month. This is directly attributable to the impact of sanctions, which have caused the breakdown of the clean water system, health facilities and all the things that young children require. All of this is just not acceptable. I don't want to administer a program that results in these kind of figures. Sanctions are being sustained by member states, knowing of this calamity. I wanted to be in a position to speak out on sanctions and the dreadful impact that they are having on the people—particularly the children—and the future of Iraq. I want to work with different groups and see if we can come up with some alternatives to sanctions as a means of the United Nations imposing its will in situations where it's required.

ITT: What are the social consequences of sanctions on Iraq?

DH: The traditional Iraqi family has begun to disintegrate. Many of the wage earners are now overseas. Some of them have taken their families, many have not; there are an increasing number of single-parent families, usually headed by women who are struggling to keep food on the table. Women now find themselves driven out of jobs and into menial tasks because they can't afford to do the intellectual type of work for the government, the civil service, universities, whatever. They are turning to sweatshops to make a living.

Iraq enjoyed a very high level of both health and education facilities for its people. These have collapsed, damaged by the war years, but now unable to recover because of a lack of money due to sanctions. A whole generation of Iraqis are not being educated. Among young children the dropout rate is more than 25 percent in the cities. They are turning to begging and street crime, which were once foreign in Baghdad. Crime was unknown here before. Now the city closes down at night because people are no longer secure.

Another area of real concern is the isolation factor. Young people are growing up isolated from the real world, only aware of the anger and resentment around them. It's going to lead to a dangerous sense of alienation from the rest of the world. I don't think we can afford that kind of situation.

Some member states seem to believe

that this sort of pressure will result in a change of government. But that's not likely to happen. Iraqis aren't thinking about democracy. They're struggling to survive and feed their families.

ITT: What actions should the United Nations take?

DH: It has to look at the economic sanctions carefully and understand that they don't justify the ends. Right now we're killing people, we're killing children. Maybe there's a risk in lifting the economic sanctions and having the country run itself—which is what they could do best and do more efficiently—but it's needed to get the people up to a level that they were at 10 years ago and to restore the quality of life, education, jobs and so on that the Iraqi people



AFP/ RAMZI HAIDAR

A funeral for 40 children who died under U.N. sanctions.

need and deserve. They are, after all, innocent of any of the decision making that resulted in the Gulf War disaster.

ITT: Are you hopeful that things will change?

DH: I'm always optimistic. I think that people are beginning to understand the unacceptable damage that economic sanctions are doing. We are sustaining a program that is killing people, and nothing justifies that in my mind. There has to be some other way. We need a more focused sanctions, perhaps. Undoubtedly the member states will want to sustain the effort of disarmament. In the meantime, we have no reason not to allow the economy and the people of Iraq to get back on their feet. ■

NEW YORK

With low voter turnout and Vallone set to be trounced by GOP Gov. George Pataki, the Working Families operation is a model of targeted, grass-roots electoral organizing. Unions are mailing Working Families propaganda twice to more than 200,000 members and union phone banks are following up with calls, first to identify those sympathetic to the new party, then to get them to the polls. In addition, multiple mailings are going out to another 130,000

The New Party, which has been part of the Working Families coalition from the beginning, has instituted an innovative e-mail chain-letter campaign: It asked its national members to send in the names of friends in New York who would likely be receptive to the Working Families message. "We got back over 5,000 names in just 48 hours," reports New Party National Director Dan Cantor, "and by the time we're done we expect to have 20,000

Some traditionally high-voting, liberal neighborhoods—in the so-called “brownstone belt” of Brooklyn’s Park Slope, Prospect Heights and Fort Greene, plus Greenwich Village and Chelsea in Manhattan—are being hit with a door-to-door canvass of likely voters identified by the phone banks. Thus, openly gay (and HIV-positive) Democratic City Councilman Tom Duane—who is about to become the first out gay state senator here, thanks to a Democratic nomination in a district where it’s tantamount to election—is devoting the bulk of his energies to activating his considerable campaign apparatus in the heavily gay Manhattan communities he represents on behalf of the Working Families Party.

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The In These Times Index of Indecencies

By David Futrelle

Everybody Must Get Stoned (9.8)

And you thought the Taliban was bad. A recent article in the libertarian magazine *Reason* turned a cold eye on Christian Reconstructionism, a brand of fundamentalism making considerable inroads on the American right that is so extreme even Jerry Falwell considers it "scary." According to theologian R.J. Rushdoony, a Reconstructionist guru, the movement advocates the death penalty for such "crimes" as homosexuality, heresy, "unchastity before marriage" and cursing one's parents. Fellow Reconstructionist Gary North, who agrees that parent-cursing "unquestionably is a capital crime," suggests extending the death penalty not only to women who get abortions, but also those who advise them to do so. And the Reconstructionists aren't satisfied with the standard forms of capital punishment. They prefer a rather retro solution: death by stoning. "Why stoning?" North writes. "There are many reasons. First, the implements of execution are available to everyone at virtually no cost." And stoning is a good way to get everyone involved: "Executions are community projects—not with spectators who watch a professional executioner do 'his' duty, but rather with actual participants."

Class Warfare (7.3)

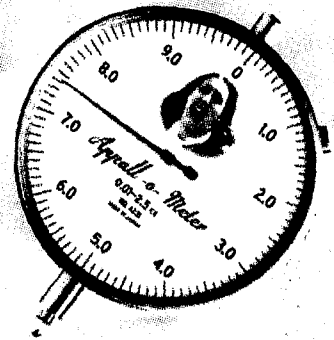
The rich are different from you and me: They can afford bigger guns. But that may change if California Treasurer Matt Fong has his way. "A lot of poor families can't afford a \$400 weapon but they can afford a \$75 weapon," Fong, the Republican candidate for



Senate, recently complained. "We can't let them be priced out of the market."

Happy Banking (5.8)

Despite the global economic troubles, which have thrown tens of millions worldwide into destitution, the parties accompanying this year's



meetings of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund in Washington, D.C., were as lavish as ever—well, almost as lavish. "Throwing a bash at this year's meeting is an exquisitely delicate business," the *Wall Street Journal* noted. "On the one hand, you want to have a great time; on the other, you don't want to be accused of a let-them-eat-hors d'oeuvres indifference to the simply dreadful global economic crisis." And so the parties this year were as big as ever—though, in some cases, thrifty party-givers weren't quite as quick to refill the gourmet food trays. Still, the bankers didn't let international turmoil spoil the fun. "For the hard work bankers are doing," one German banker told the *Journal*, "you must keep them happy and relaxed."

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Continued from page 5

There are two major problems. One is that Working Families was assigned a lousy position on the New York ballot with different listings in New York City and upstate, making it hard for voters to find the right lever to pull. The second is that Vallone, whose Working Families endorsement was dictated largely by internal union politics, is a lackluster hack from the Queens County Democratic machine whose near-penniless campaign has been a disaster. Even Working Families' biggest supporters



Peter Vallone

have little enthusiasm for its candidate: As Cantor says with a chuckle, "Our slogan is 'vote the party, not the man.'"

If the party does get its 50,000 votes, it remains to be seen if it will be allowed to become more than a tail on the Democratic dog. As the party's political godfather Sal Albanese—whose populist Democratic primary campaign for mayor last year won a quarter of the vote on a shoestring—puts it, "There was a lot of national union pressure on their

guys here, first to stay away from Working Families, and then to endorse Vallone. If it becomes just a manipulative electoral adjunct of business unionism, the experiment will have failed."

But that will be a question decided after the election. For now, if you live in New York, look for the Working Families logo on the voting machines and help snatch a progressive victory from the jaws of a Democratic defeat. ■

Doug Ireland, the former media critic for the Village Voice, has also been a columnist for the New York Observer, New York magazine, and the Paris daily Libération.

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The Malaysian Equation: Economic Crisis = Less Democracy

By G. Pascal Zachary

KUALA LUMPUR, MALAYSIA

From Bangkok to Jakarta to Seoul, the deepening world economic crisis has undermined the legitimacy of local elites throughout East Asia, giving ordinary people new opportunities for dissent and the best chance in decades to strengthen their role in civil society. The fall of Suharto in Indonesia was only the most dramatic example of how economic problems have dealt a body blow to the so-called "Asian values" argument, which holds that all East Asians prefer consensus over confrontation, defer to authority and care most about keeping their bellies full, not individual rights or political freedoms.

Over the past year, the political changes in East Asia have been startling—showing that "Asian values" were mainly cherished by rulers, not the ruled. In Korea, Kim Dae Jung, a former dissident and political prisoner, is now president. In Hong Kong's recent elections, pro-democracy activists scored well at the polls. In Thailand, a new constitution and a growing backlash against official corruption are sowing the seeds for more responsive government. Even the leaders of famously authoritarian Singapore are quietly considering whether the people should be more involved in politics.

But the push for greater openness has its limits. The Chinese government is slowly draining Hong Kong of its autonomy, pushing Shanghai as the nation's global trading center. In Indonesia, the new president, B.J. Habibie, is a Suharto crony who is ambivalent about social reform and unwilling to halt the pillaging of the nation's natural resources by multinationals and domestic tycoons. Thailand's Prime Minister Chuan Leekpai, elected last November after pledging to attack corruption, is fighting off charges that his own cabinet misused public funds. Even in Korea, Kim—a steadfast democrat who draws comparisons with South Africa's Nelson Mandela—has curtailed his reform agenda out of fear that the nation's feisty unions have too much freedom already.

It is in Malaysia, however, that the economic crisis most dramatically has limited democracy. A country of 20 million people, which is officially Islamic despite being home to sizable minorities of Chinese, Indian and indigenous people, Malaysia borders Thailand to the west and Indonesia to the east. A former British colony, where English is still widely spoken, Malaysia has been a haven for multinational investment and has seen sharp rises in living standards over the past 20 years. But in the face of an impending crisis, the government of Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad has launched relentless attacks on human rights advocates, civic activists and political reformers.

When the crisis first hit Malaysia in the fall of 1997, Mahathir blamed foreign currency speculators, singling out billionaire George Soros and unnamed Jewish traders as part of a shadowy scheme to wreck his country's economy. Early this year, he tried to deflect public frustration by calling for the forced deportation of a million foreign workers.

Then in September, with Malaysia's economy contracting sharply, Mahathir turned on his deputy and heir-apparent, Anwar Ibrahim. The 72-year-old Mahathir had been expected eventually to cede his post to Anwar, 51. But Anwar proved too sympathetic to U.S. Treasury Secretary Robert Rubin and officials at the International Monetary Fund, who urged Malaysia to stop bailing out its troubled companies, many of

In the face of an impending crisis, Prime Minister Mahathir has launched attacks on human rights advocates, civic activists and political reformers.



AFP/UPALI ATURUGIRI

which were owned by big contributors to Mahathir. A vocal critic of the IMF, Mahathir fired Anwar and then arrested him on trumped up charges of sodomy, which is illegal in Malaysia.

The charges against Anwar, a devout Muslim who is married, strain credulity; Amnesty International has declared him a prisoner of conscience and called for his immediate release. When Anwar appeared in court in late September with bruises on his face and complained of a prison beating, the prime minister suggested the blows were self-inflicted. Mahathir has suspended his trial temporarily, pending a November visit from President Bill Clinton.

Anwar's treatment puts a global spotlight on Mahathir, a leader who has effectively managed to muzzle the press and stifle critics since coming to power 17 years ago. His main weapon against critics is the threat of arrest without trial, permissible under the country's Internal Security Act. But he also fired the nation's Supreme Court when it went against him, and used his political party's direct ownership of the news media and big businesses to punish critics and reward friends. To be sure, part of Mahathir's influence comes from his popularity. Many Malaysians admire the way he attacks Western countries, sniffing about imperialism and the tendency of the West to view East Asians as inferior.

But a growing number of Malaysians are impatient with Mahathir, ashamed of his outbursts. "One of our biggest problems is our neo-feudal culture," says Chandra Muzaffar, a leading intellectual here and a professor at the University of Malaya. "Our culture has a certain hierarchy of power. You don't question or challenge the ruler. But you should ask questions. You can do so without being brash. That's our problem, we don't speak up."

Yet public debate about government policies, the environment or even personal and social values is unheard of in Malaysia, and the penalties for speaking out are severe. Consider the case of Irene Fernandez: In August 1995, Fernandez published a report on abuses in detention camps for migrant workers. The report, based on 300 interviews with prisoners, claimed that women prisoners were sexually abused and that men were beaten and denied medical treatment. The government charged Fernandez with "maliciously publishing false news," a criminal violation that carries a three-year prison term. Despite later admitting that 70 migrants had died in detention camps, the government put Fernandez on trial.

The case has dragged on for more than two years for no other reason, Fernandez says, than "to keep a jail sentence dangling over me." The prosecution recently finished presenting its arguments, and a judge could rule on the case as early as November 2. Amnesty International already has declared her innocent, and independent legal observers dismiss the government's arguments as politically motivated. "Fernandez's trial is a continuing message not to cause trouble," says John Dwyer, a law professor at the University of California, Berkeley, who has studied political repression in Malaysia.

Even while on trial, Fernandez, who is of Indian descent, has remained active in the movement to protect migrant workers and to build a political opposition to Mahathir. Now 52, she began campaigning to reduce violence against women in the mid-'80s, after years of trying to organize factory workers. Her effort resulted in a federal law on domestic violence, and another shift for Fernandez. "In the early '90s," she recalls, "I realized I was attracting a lot of professional and middle-class men and women, but we weren't mobilizing women at the grass-roots level." So Fernandez formed a new nonprofit group, Tenaganita, to aid the poorest and most exploited women in Malaysia—those who worked as prostitutes, domestics and plantation and small factory workers.

While her own case has received scant attention in the local or international press, Fernandez hopes that the uproar over Anwar's treatment will radicalize ordinary people. If the nation's second-most powerful politician can be tossed into jail for spurious reasons, what defense do average citizens have against ill treatment? "People are looking more and more at the need for human rights," she says. Despite the risks of speaking out, she thinks Malaysians "are ready to say 'enough is enough.'"

Where that will lead isn't clear. But with the global capitalist crisis worsening, Mahathir—like other dictators masquerading as populists—sees his options narrowing. He can strike a heavier blow against his critics or somehow make amends with them. Either path carries a price. ■

G. Pascal Zachary writes about world affairs and international economics. He frequently visits Malaysia.

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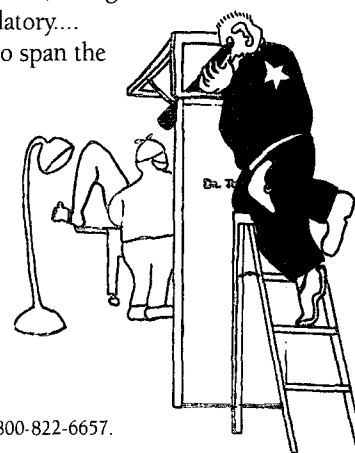
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Art from *When Abortion Was a Crime*

~~No~~ Strings Attached

By Jane Slaughter

Who's backing James P. Hoffa's campaign for Teamsters president? A slew of attorneys, eager to curry favor with the front-runner, have kicked in half a million dollars in cash and credit to Hoffa's swollen war chest. Companies hoping for patronage have also given big bucks, and some large employers of Teamsters are going out of their way to smooth Hoffa's path.

After the campaign finance scandal that marred the 1996 Teamsters election, the government imposed limits on donations. Working Teamsters each may give a maximum of \$1,000 to a candidate's campaign fund; non-Teamsters may contribute zero. But there's a loophole for legal expenses; anyone may donate as much as they want to a candidate's Legal and Accounting Fund. Hoffa's fund has taken in almost \$650,000.

One of the fund's largest contributors is Robert Baptiste, a Washington attorney and former general counsel of the Teamsters. According to reports filed by Hoffa's campaign, Baptiste has donated \$149,327 in unpaid services. One of Baptiste's clients was former Teamsters President Roy Williams, who was convicted of bribing a U.S. Senator with union pension funds. In that case, Baptiste recommended that the union spend half a million dollars on Williams' defense. He also represented Joseph "Joe T" Trerotola, an associate of Mafia figures and head of the union's Eastern Conference who was expelled for corruption in 1991.

Baptiste may hope to regain his lucrative position under a Hoffa presidency, and Hoffa has shown that he understands tit for tat. He publicly has promised a job to one employer/donor, Richard Leebove, whom the government monitor kicked out of the Hoffa campaign in April. Hoffa was fined \$167,650 for accepting free PR services from Leebove.

Some of the law firms donating to Hoffa, such as the

Michigan firm of Finkel, Whitefield—which has sunk \$40,796 into his campaign—are corporate law firms that represent employers in actions against the Teamsters. But it's not just lawyers and PR men who are donating in hopes of future Teamsters business. Various companies—from industrial health clinics and health management firms to a trinket-sales outfit—also have their eyes on patronage possibilities. A Michigan dentist gave \$15,000 to Hoffa's Legal and Accounting Fund; a nonunion printing firm in St. Louis, which was also Missouri's tenth largest corporate donor to Republicans, gave \$35,000.

Hoffa's main opponent, Warehouse Division director Tom Leedham, has a balance of around \$6,000 in his Legal and Accounting Fund, according to campaign manager Steve Trossman. Donations, usually in the \$25 to \$100 range, have come from retired Teamsters, family members of Teamsters and liberal professors. "We won't accept donations of any kind from corporations or big business," Trossman says. "Hoffa seems willing to take money from anybody who's got a checkbook."

Hoffa has put his immense legal fund to use, hiring law firms to file hundreds of protests with the government election monitor against Leedham and the reform group that supports him, Teamsters for a Democratic Union (TDU). Very few of Hoffa's protests are upheld, but they are a useful form of harassment.

Election monitor Michael Cherkasky has upheld Leedham's many protests against Teamsters employers, however, when they have tried to keep pro-Leedham campaigners off company property. The election rules give candidates and supporters the right to campaign in parking lots. Anheuser-Busch, for example, where the union is engaged in an ongoing contract dispute, kicked Leedham off its property at

Deep Pockets

Despite the clean-up efforts of the Carey administration before its ouster, 132 Teamsters officials still make more than \$100,000 a year. An overwhelming majority of them support Hoffa.

Every year, Teamsters for a Democratic Union (TDU) releases a list of the "\$100,000 Club." Most club members draw salaries from locals and joint councils, rather than the international union. This year's leader is Frank Wsol of Chicago, whose two salaries (plus expenses) add up to \$473,069. Wsol was expelled from the union in 1996 after the National Labor Relations Board found he had conspired with UPS management to fire a Teamster who wrote a critical letter to *Teamster* magazine. But at the 1996 Teamsters convention, pro-Hoffa

delegates had the majority. Chanting "Free Frank Wsol," they returned him to power. Chicago officials snared six of the top 13 slots on the list.

Number two at the trough is Mike Riley of Los Angeles, with three Teamsters salaries (plus expenses) totalling \$305,671. Apparently Riley's own wages were insufficient; the government monitor found that he tried to channel union funds to Hoffa's campaign.

"These fat cats want Junior Hoffa elected because he'll give the green light to take even more outrageous and multiple salaries," says Ken Paff of TDU.

Reform candidate Tom Leedham's platform, on the other hand, would prohibit anyone who receives a salary from the International from taking a second salary from another body in the union. Leedham, with three positions and a salary of \$90,000, did not make the club. **J.S.**

a California facility and had union Vice President Tom Gilmartin arrested. Company officials said they were afraid Leedham might agitate against their proposed contract. Management backed down only after the U.S. Attorney threatened them with contempt of court.

In Walla Walla, Wash., Iowa Beef Processing called the police on campaigner Raul Alvarado. When a sheriff's deputy handcuffed Alvarado, he was surrounded by 75 protesting Teamsters. UPS likewise called the police on a Leedham slate member in Minneapolis. Earlier, UPS was found guilty of instructing managers to post pro-Hoffa material. USA Waste

was found to have barred Leedham supporters in Los Angeles, in collaboration with local union officials who support Hoffa. A company official told Cherkasky's office that he would permit Hoffa supporters to campaign, but not TDU members.

Leedham reports that Teamsters are responding well to his Lown slate's reform message, but "until we started our rank-and-file campaign, Hoffa was the only name they knew." Members of Leedham's slate are campaigning hard at workplaces across the country, but they cannot match Hoffa's money and media exposure.

Lately, though, Hoffa has shown signs of nervousness. In September, he commissioned a poll of Teamsters members, but would not release the results. Since then, he's come out with attacks on Leedham in leaflets, in the media and on his web page. At a UPS hub in Livonia, Mich., in September, Hoffa happened to be campaigning at the same time as Leedham slate member Dave Eckstein. When a Teamster declined to take Hoffa's leaflet, Hoffa blew up and called her a "communist."

In October, Cherkasky proposed a candidates' debate, but Hoffa refused to participate. Tom Pazzi, Hoffa's campaign manager, says they didn't want to "catapult Hoffa's opponents into a name recognition and stature which they, unlike Hoffa, haven't earned." Hoffa, of course, is in the race for no other reason than his name. TDU organizer Ken Paff says, "Hoffa was born on third base and thinks he hit a triple."

Ballots will be mailed to 1.4 million Teamsters on November 2 and counted December 3. ■

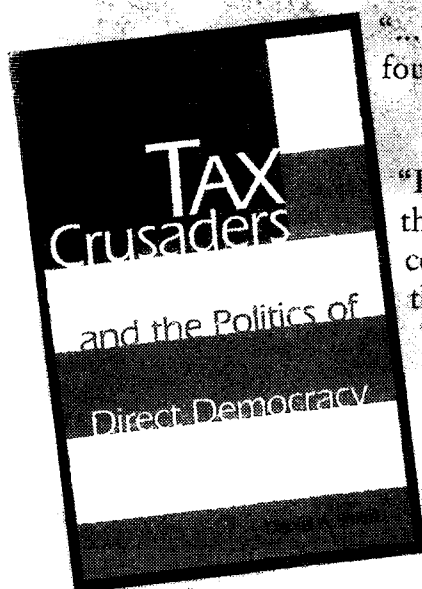
Jane Slaughter is a labor journalist in Detroit.

\$100,000 Club Top Ten

Listed below are the 10 Teamsters drawing the highest total compensation (salary plus expenses) in 1997.

1. Frank Wsol	Chicago	\$473,069
2. Michael J. Riley	Los Angeles	\$305,671
3. John T. Coli	Chicago	\$237,300
4. Patrick W. Flynn	Chicago	\$235,670
5. Carroll Haynes	New York	\$235,565
6. Tom Sever	Jeanette, Penn.	\$231,240
7. Jack Cox	Los Angeles	\$230,451
8. Joseph L. Bernstein	Chicago	\$220,094
9. Ed Mireles	Orange, Calif.	\$218,262
10. Leo Reed	Los Angeles	\$207,836

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Pastrana's Problems

The Colombian Peace Process is at the Mercy of the U.S. Drug War

By Mario A. Murillo

On September 16, in cities and towns across Colombia, thousands of men, women and children, workers, peasants and students, banged on pots, blew car horns and played musical instruments in a symbolic act to "make noise for peace." It was the latest gesture carried out by Colombian "civil society" in recent months demanding an end to the country's 35-year-old civil war.

That same day in Washington, the House of Representatives approved the Western Hemisphere Drug Elimination Act (HR 4300), a \$2.3-billion measure that its Republican sponsors say will cut the flow of drugs into the United States from Latin America by 80 percent by 2001. The bill includes \$208 million in military aid to Colombia, including helicopters and machine guns for counter-drug operations. With very little public debate or media fanfare, the measure was approved by a resounding 384 to 39 margin, a bipartisan, pre-election stamp of approval for the further militarization of the war on drugs.

These two events highlight conflicting visions of how to deal with "the Colombia problem." Many Colombians see ending a war that has claimed more than 35,000 lives as the main government priority; the United States continues to place drugs at the top of the policy-making agenda. Stuck in the middle is Colombia's new president, Andres Pastrana, who has taken the initial steps in what is certain to be a long and arduous peace process, but must still contend with the considerable leverage that Washington holds in Colombia's internal affairs. In recent years, Colombia has been the largest recipient of U.S. military aid in the region. Last year alone,

the United States sent more than \$150 million in counter-narcotics assistance to Colombian state security forces.

Pastrana's election in June ended the 12-year grip on the presidency held by the Liberal Party, the larger of Colombia's two traditional political forces, which have dominated the country's politics for generations. He received the presidential sash from the beleaguered Ernesto Samper, whose four-year mandate was mired in a scandal over allegations that he received campaign contributions

from the Cali cocaine cartel in 1994, leading the United States to decertify Colombia as a partner in the drug war from 1996 to 1998.

Many observers say that as the leader of the Conservative Party, Pastrana may be the only one with sufficient political support from both the military and political establishment to sit down with the country's two primary guerrilla organizations, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and the National

Liberation Army (ELN). In recent years, the guerrillas have won a series of significant military victories. While it's unrealistic to talk of an impending rebel takeover, the government readiness to talk peace for the first time since 1992 is a direct result of a major turnaround in the war.

At the same time, since the October 1997 "Mandate for Peace," when more than 10 million Colombians voted in favor of ending the conflict, there have been countless demonstrations throughout the country in support of the peace process. Through two broad-based coalitions, the Permanent Assembly for Peace and the National Reconciliation Commission, Colombians from many differ-



TERRY LABAN

ent sectors are demanding that all sides of the conflict sit down at the negotiating table.

The international community also has taken an interest in the peace process. While prominent world leaders, from Nelson Mandela to Fidel Castro, have pushed for a political solution to the crisis, any solution hinges on the United States. On the eve of the U.N. General Assembly meeting in New York on September 20, Pastrana called HR 4300 "one of the worst possible things to happen to U.S.-Colombian relations." Pastrana's unexpected public critique was a reaction to a controversial amendment included in the bill, which would make Colombia ineligible for U.S. counter-narcotics aid if anti-drug efforts are hampered in any way by Pastrana's plan to order a troop pullout from five municipalities in southern Colombia later this year. Although the measure will not go to the Senate before the midterm elections, its passage in the House is a cause for concern in Colombia.

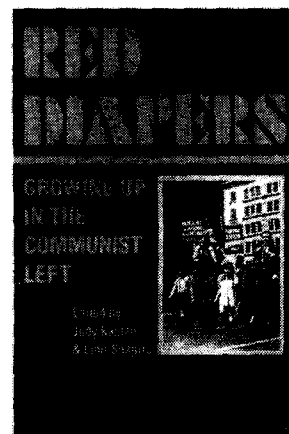
Pastrana insists that a peace agreement is the first step in addressing the drug problem.

The demilitarization of the South was one of several preconditions put forward by FARC for any future peace negotiations with the new government. Pastrana first discussed the matter with the commander of FARC, Manuel Marulanda Velez, during a highly publicized jungle meeting in July, before Pastrana's inauguration. While the plan was greeted with some skepticism by the hawks in Colombia's military establishment, the demilitarization has been accepted by the military's newly appointed high command and is likely to begin by the end of October.

In Washington, however, there is concern about how the pullout will impact anti-narcotics operations in the region. According to Colombian government statistics, the demilitarization area accounts for 12 percent of Colombia's total coca and poppy crop cultivation, a relatively small percentage. Despite Pastrana's insistence that a comprehensive peace agreement with the guerrillas is the first step in addressing the country's complex drug problem, the United States fears that a troop pullout from the region will allow narcotraffickers to operate with complete impunity. "Congress is directly interfering in the very delicate peace process, which the government of Pastrana is slowly embarking on and the majority of the Colombian people are demanding," says Winifred Tate of the Washington Office on Latin America, a human rights group focusing on the Western Hemisphere.

Tate says that the threat to cut off \$208 million in aid to Colombia puts undue pressure on Pastrana to reconsider the military pullout in the South, something that could easily torpedo future peace talks. "The role of the United States in an eventual peace process will be essential," agrees Daniel Garcia Peña, the senior official in Samper's government responsible for peace talks. "It remains to be seen if those people in Washington who favor a negotiated settlement will win out over those hawks in the Congress and within the Clinton administration who feel the only solution is more force."

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The Clinton administration has failed to distinguish between narcotraffickers, who profit from the processing, marketing, and distribution of illicit drugs, and the guerrillas, who for years have collected a kind of war tax by protecting illicit cultivation, but who are not directly involved in the drug trade. This strips the guerrillas of any political legitimacy. FARC's specific program of radical agrarian reform and the ELN's campaign against the privatization of the state's main industries get lost in the anti-drug rhetoric.

The Government Accounting Office reported in February that the United States has sent more than \$830 million in counter-narcotics support to Colombia since 1990, only about a third of which went toward anti-narcotics programs. The rest of the money was used directly for military expenditures. For years, human rights groups in Colombia and the United States have demanded an end to military aid for army units implicated in human rights violations, forcing Congress to track where aid goes. However, during a visit to Colombia last October, McCaffrey stated unequivocally that U.S. military counter-narcotics assistance could be used by Colombia's state security forces against the "narcoguerrillas," officially blurring the line between rebels and drug traffickers. "It seems to us that poor Colombia is bleeding not only because of drugs," McCaffrey said, "but because it has 15,000 narcoguerrillas with machine guns, land mines and an enormous brutality."

After a stunning string of defeats—including the August 3 rebel offensive that killed 70 government soldiers and police and annihilated a U.S.-funded base in the southern town of Miraflores—there has been talk of a complete re-

evaluation of the military's counter-insurgency strategy, moving from a defensive, wait-and-see approach to more offensive operations involving mobile brigades in active pursuit of rebel positions. And if peace talks take place in the next year, it is unlikely that the military will want to sit at the negotiating table from their current position of weakness. "Clearly there is going to be an escalation of the war

There is no question that Washington will play a direct role in any escalation of the war.

before we see any progress in the area of peace," says Diego Perez of the Center for Research and Popular Education, a Jesuit-run organization in Bogotá.

Citing unidentified U.S. intelligence sources, the *Dallas Morning News* recently reported "that the Clinton administration was responding to the guerrilla threat by launching a multimillion-dollar covert program—employing mercenaries, private contractors and active-duty military personnel—to support the Colombian armed forces." Perez says that with the Colombian government's continued dependence on U.S. military support and training, there is no question that Washington will play a direct role in any escalation of the war.

U.S. officials repeatedly have denied involvement by U.S. forces in direct military, counter-insurgency operations. They insist that the 200 to 250 U.S. military personnel working on the ground in Colombia are dedicated solely to managing and maintaining radar installations, training Colombian police and providing technical assistance for illicit crop spraying missions by Colombian pilots. Nevertheless, Colombian authorities acknowledged in late September that a U.S. pilot was shot by guerrillas while flying a Colombian military helicopter into one of the country's war zones. According to Gen. Euclides Sanchez, the Army's chief of operations, 30-year-old Nilo Bernier was shot in mid-August when his army helicopter came under rebel fire in the northwestern region of Urabá. Sanchez says that Bernier was picking up wounded soldiers. The incident was the first ever in which a U.S. soldier has been wounded in combat between the Colombian Army and armed insurgents.

These developments come as more and more Colombians are demanding an end to the war. The civilian protests are unprecedented in Colombia, where a generation has been shaken by the vicious dirty war waged against human rights activists, indigenous and peasant leaders, trade unionists and student organizers. Through marches, public forums, media campaigns and other activities, the collective voice of civil society, exhausted by so many years of political violence, seems to be reaching the ears of the main actors in the conflict.

Unfortunately, the noise they're making isn't getting to Washington. ■

Mario A. Murillo is host and producer of the nationally syndicated *Our Americas: The Weekly Report on Latin America and the Caribbean*, distributed by *Pacifica Radio*.

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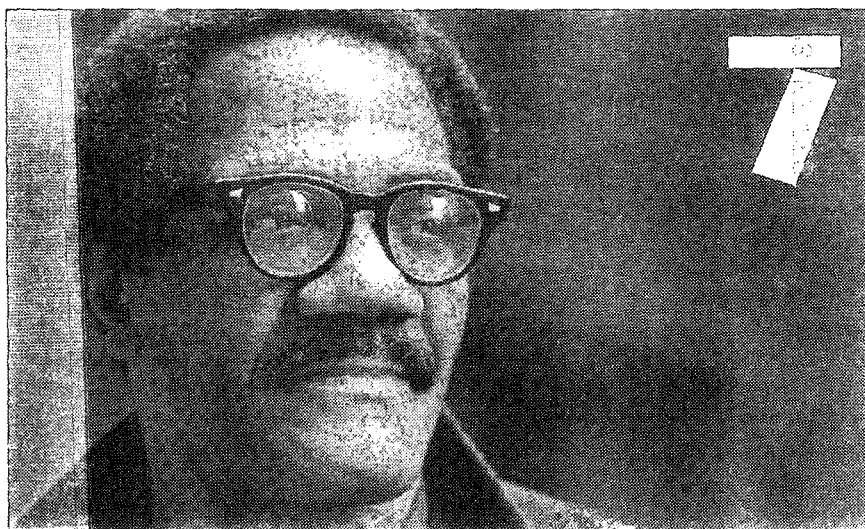
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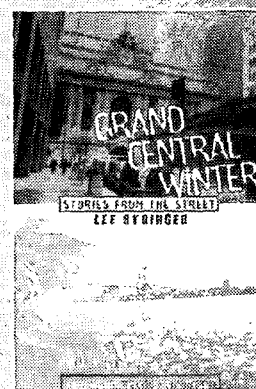
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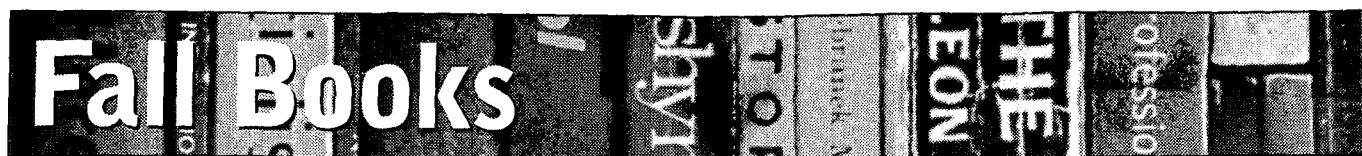
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Fall Books

Revolutions Per Minute

By Scott McLemee

Ten years ago, postmodernism was hot—and not merely in the sense of the trendy-hip (though it was that, too). It aroused strong passions. The debates often generated more heat than light; and so “the postmodern” remained a very murky concept. For one thing, it proved extraordinarily fluid. A postmodern spirit manifested itself in the most improbably diverse array of fields: architecture, literature,

pomo writer). Postmodernists were also given to imitating, or quoting, or in some cases outright plagiarizing, earlier styles or movements. And there was a marked tendency to erase, or at least to blur, the older demarcations of cultural hierarchy—between “high” and “popular” forms, but also between the serious and the frivolous, between the mass-produced and the unique.

It even became a sort of parlor game to sort out the “pomo” from the merely “modern.” David Lynch was postmodernist. Hitchcock was not. Dense and symbol-laden novels by Kafka or Proust were modernist, while MTV was decidedly pomo.

But what really heated up the debate was the notion that “postmodernism” was something more than a label for various stylistic peculiarities. It might be (went one argument) that the world had entered some new phase: a deep transformation, an irreversible break with the values of the past. Jean-François Lyotard and Jean Baudrillard—two writers whose work served as benchmarks for discussion of “postmodernism”—indicated that the mutation was well underway. In *The Postmodern Condition* (published in France in 1979), Lyotard announced that the old “metanarratives” of progress—the grand stories of Enlightenment and/or Emancipation that society had told itself over the past couple of centuries—were now kaput. Now, Lyotard wrote, we were making it all up as we went along: “The temporary contract is in practice supplanting permanent institutions in the professional, emotional, sexual, cultural, family, and international domains, as well as in political affairs.” The essays of Baudrillard portrayed a science-fictionish vision of the inexorable victory of information technology over its users. With the total saturation of contempo-

rary life by cybernetics and telecommunications, “reality” was disappearing into a feedback loop of “simulation.”

In any event, the Zeitgeist had certainly developed a knack for using the “post-” prefix. The idea that we were living in a “postmodern” world also assumed that society was now “post-industrial”—which could only mean that social theory had to be “post-Marxist,” not to mention “post-structuralist” and “postfeminist.” And back in the Golden Age of pomo, many forests were destroyed so that the implications could be tracked down.

Two new books on postmodernism by Perry Anderson and Fredric Jameson are fairly late interventions in the discussion. Or so it would appear. In fact, the arrival of postmodernism as a decisively important term had been heralded by Jameson in a lecture in 1982 (reprinted now as the first chapter of *The Cultural Turn*)—

A concept meant to criticize capitalism became a registered trademark of Culture-Economy, Inc.

expanding, two years later, into a landmark essay appearing in *New Left Review* (of which Anderson was editor). This early work treated postmodernist works as manifestations of “the cultural logic of late capitalism.” And so, for Jameson—whose book *The Political Unconscious* (1981) was arguably the most important work of Marxist literary theory ever written by an American—a fully worked-out theory of the postmodern would form an indispensable weapon in the arsenal of radical cultural criticism.

The Origins of Postmodernism

By Perry Anderson

Verso

143 pages, \$16

The Cultural Turn: Selected Writings on the Postmodern, 1983-1998

By Fredric Jameson

Verso

206 pages, \$16

philosophy, film, politics, theology and pop culture (to make the list no longer than that). Yet efforts to pin down the concept with precision tended to become almost comically futile. It was like nailing jelly to a board.

Could a term so loose and mobile have any particular meaning? Or rather, might its very ambiguity and shape-shifting resilience be—paradoxically enough—the most definitive thing about postmodernism? Hashing out such questions became one of the more distinctive preoccupations of intellectuals during the '80s and early '90s. The expression “pomo” had to be coined, just to save time.

Perhaps the least controversial matter was the set of basic features characterizing the pomo style in the arts. Postmodernism—in literature, painting, film or even advertising—usually involved a high degree of irony and fragmentation. (“Fragments are the only form I trust,” said a character in a story by Donald Barthelme, a canonical

But something odd happened. A concept meant to describe (and to criticize) the culture of capitalist society turned into a briskly traded commodity. A period of wild speculation began. The value of the term climbed to new heights, like the stock market, or a chart of a feverish patient. And then it crashed. Discussion of postmodernism cooled down considerably by the mid-'90s—when “globalization” replaced it as *buzzword du jour*.

So now we have a couple of untimely meditations on postmodernism, issued by a major left-wing publisher. My first response to learning this was not, in fact, to leap for joy. In a moment of inspired sarcasm, Barthelme once wrote that the quintessential product of modern American society was the plastic buffalo hump: a mass-produced object at once ugly, non-biodegradable and perfectly useless. And books on postmodernism have long since become the plastic buffalo humps of intellectual life.

To which rule, it seems, an exception must be made. The pair of titles under review won't revive the polemics of yesteryear, at least one hopes; but this retrospective account of postmodernism is far richer than most of the previous literature. In a way the two books form a single project. Perry Anderson started to write an introduction to Fredric Jameson's studies on pomo, but got a little carried away. *The Origins of Postmodernism* stands on its own as an essay in cultural history: It has the broad sweep of a mural, compressed to the dimensions of a postcard, without any loss of telling detail. (The few pages on Jean-François Lyotard, for example, are more insightful, and better informed, than most discussions of the philosopher). As for Jameson's essays in *The Cultural Turn*, they are the work of a critic who, in an age of extreme specialization, brings the most diverse materials (aesthetic, philosophical, historical) into the force-field of a powerful, synthesizing argument. Whatever problems Jameson's analysis may have, timidity is not one of them.

Between them, these volumes attempt not just to interpret the array of pomo cultural phenomena—a big job in itself—but to offer a comprehensive synthesis absorbing all previous accounts of

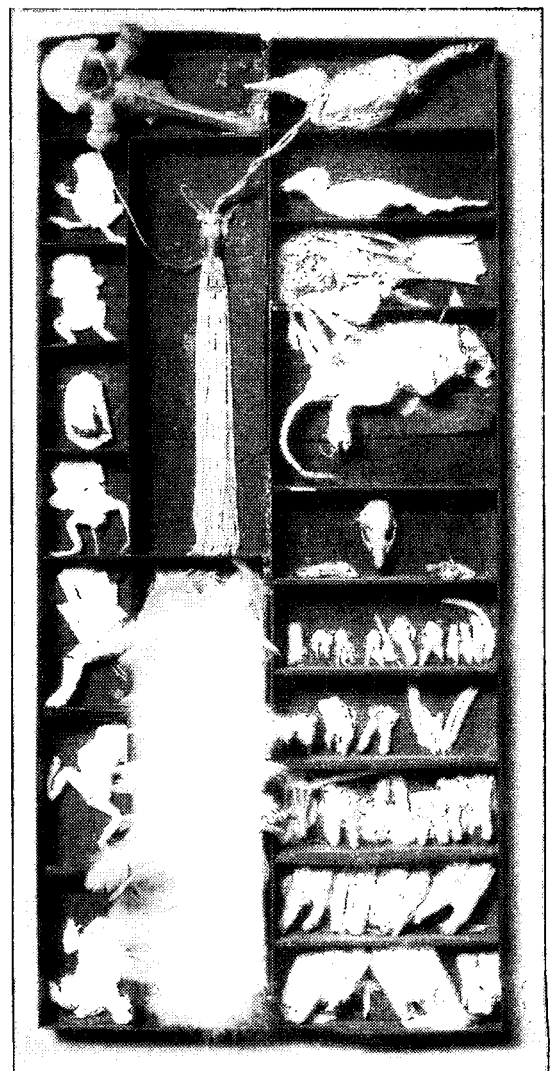
postmodernity. The inspiration, at least in Jameson's case, is Hegelian-Marxist. It assumes that all artistic works and theoretical concepts are marked, in their deepest cells, by the history and logic of the dominant mode of production, which is (alas!) capitalist. Irony and fragmentation may be characteristic of postmodernism; but to understand pomo dialectically means trying to get a handle on the social totality in which it appears: a world characterized by the steady expansion of the market, mass-production, and the accompanying systems of advertisement and publicity throughout the entirety of social life.

Now, the term “postmodern” had a rather complex and far-flung itinerary before Jameson got ahold of it—one mapped and chronicled with real finesse in Anderson's survey. In the old days, critics discussing postmodernism tended to regard it as the legacy (or perhaps the sequel, disappointing as sequels tend to be) of a modernist era that was in many ways far more heroic. The early years of the century had been a period of experimentation and innovation in the arts: a time of manifestoes (surrealist, futurist, constructivist) announcing the goal of radical cultural transformations.

Avant gardes of that period, Anderson writes, tended to be drawn either to the memory of pre-capitalist life (the orderly cosmos of feudalism, the ceremonial art of Africa or Polynesia) or the visions of radical social change (the Bolshevik revolution had its modernist contingent). In either case, there was a sharp rejection of the values of commercial civilization.

But following the second

World War, landed aristocracies became walking museum pieces, while revolutionary activity in the industrialized West declined (save for a brief period in the late '60s and early '70s). A new stage of capitalism took shape. One conspicuous feature of its culture was the institutionalization of the avant garde. Old movements were studied in the academy. The art market absorbed (and used up) novelty at an amazing pace. Critics found themselves speculating about “postmodernism.” Yet there was something fairly sad about the term; it was less a concept than a sigh of disappointment. In an essay on “Mass Society and Post-Modern Fiction” (1959)—citing Norman Mailer, Jack Kerouac and Saul Bellow as examples of the latter—Irving Howe wondered if, perhaps, the culture had “reached the end of one of those recurrent periods of



Clean White Things in a Dirty Box. Sculpture by William Dugan. From *Vietnam: Reflexes and Reflections*, from the National Vietnam Veterans Art Museum (Abrams).

cultural unrest, innovation, and excitement that we call the 'modern.'"

What distinguishes postmodernism *à la* Jameson from earlier incarnations is his reluctance to treat pomo as merely the aftermath of the Golden Age when Picasso and Proust and other giants walked the earth. The distinctiveness of postmodern culture—the necessity of understanding it on its own terms, without making invidious comparisons to an earlier period—is an assumption Jameson announces as his point of departure. Yet there is a sense in which Jameson too heaves a sigh. For in his analysis, the era of postmodernity involves the complete breach of any border separating "culture" from "economy"—so that radical dreams of the subversive potential of the imagination become deeply problematic. To put it mildly.

Conservatives used to complain that the '60s were the logical outcome of modernist "adversarial culture" going into the streets. While Jameson and Anderson are both guys you would want to invite to speak at an anniversary celebration of the Tet Offensive, their books are strikingly consistent with that

idea. And they, too, take it as obvious that the demands for radical change once put forward in avant garde manifestoes have become part of the mainstream discourse. Challenges to

Modern: Oscar Wilde and the Harlem Renaissance. Postmodern: Gay Republicans and Afrocentric CD-ROMS.

traditional arrangements in sexuality, patterns of life, etc., turn out to be quite compatible with consumerism. The writings of Oscar Wilde and the Harlem Renaissance were modernist; but postmodernity means gay Republicans and Afrocentric CD-ROMS.

Not altogether a bad thing, perhaps. Worse outcomes were possible. But the very possibility of some alternative—of conceiving a world not created and managed, in every conceivable detail, by the protocols of market and mass production—begins to fade from memory. Still, there is a constant flux of innovations and renovations: a blur of rapidly shifting images and styles, of new technologies and alternative lifestyles. In Jameson's account, postmodernism is capital at some hitherto unimaginable pitch of intrusiveness and rapacity—a system both global in scope and claustrophobia-inducing in its insistence on breathing down the back of your neck.

There is a notorious—and possibly insoluble—problem with any interpretation of culture as all-inclusive as the one Jameson provides. Sure,

it's sweeping and profound, and breathtaking in its syntheses. (You put down these volumes with a sense that Hegel's lectures on aesthetics illuminate Hollywood's tendency to make action-adventure movies with lots of explosions, and maybe vice versa.) Yet the force of Jameson's analysis is to make it seem absolutely futile to resist the raiding operations of Culture-Economy, Inc.—the transnational corporation, of which "pomo" is a registered trademark.

If postmodernism is a system in which all the parts are determined by the logic of capitalism, that doesn't give leftist intellectuals a lot of wiggle room. Nor is there any space set aside—in this otherwise very capacious theory—for the question of how pomo culture is *lived* by working people. "Postmodernism is the cultural logic of a capitalism not embattled, but complacent beyond precedent," writes Anderson. "Resistance can only start by staring down this order as it is." But how? Waxing nostalgic about police states that once called themselves "socialist"—as Jameson does—is not sufficient unto the task.

Meanwhile, the market gobbles up the planet, and poisons it; and an accelerating flow of image and text shrinks the pomo attention span, so that fragments are the only form we have time for, let alone trust.

Perry Anderson calls postmodernism "the cultural ether of a global system that overruled all geographical divisions." Physicists used to hypothesize the existence of a very fine substance—the cosmic ether—permeating the whole universe, even the oceans of seemingly empty space between galaxies. I suppose that is what the word means, as Anderson uses it. But there is also the ether that is used as an anaesthetic. Such, perhaps, is the culture of postmodernism at the twilight of the century—

while the evening is spread out against the sky
like a patient etherized upon a table

—as a modernist poet once put it. And bit by bit, the vital organs are cut away. ■

Scott McLemee, a contributing editor for *Lingua Franca*, also writes for *Salon*, *Newsday* and *The Nation*.



*Lenape (Delaware)
man and son, 1906.*

Photo by Mark R.
Harrington. From
Spirit Capture
(Smithsonian).

Which Side Are You On?

By David Roediger

Early this year, workers at Honeywell unexpectedly struck against a two-tier benefit system. They shivered on the picket line with no barrel of wood or other source of heat. The experience of picketing was such a distant memory that the local did not think of keeping warm—even in Minneapolis in mid-winter.

The run-up to the 1998 Northwest Airlines pilots strike featured pre-

From the Ashes of the Old: American Labor and America's Future

By Stanley Aronowitz
Houghton Mifflin
246 pages, \$25

dictably chaotic problems with rescheduling passengers. The airlines' advice: Call your travel agent to unsnarl matters. The buck passing came just after Northwest had cut agents' commissions by as much as 20 percent.

Writing from death row, the journalist and political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal recently devoted an entire column to encouraging solidarity with the multiracial Philadelphia transit strike. At the same time, in some areas the AFL-CIO withdrew opposition to privatized prisons in return for concessions that make it easier to organize the guards.

Such items help to account for the mixed messages of peril and promise that Stanley Aronowitz delivers in *From the Ashes of the Old: American Labor and America's Future*. New anti-corporate alliances and new dreams for labor exist alongside old habits and nightmares.

Aronowitz, a professor at City University of New York and a former labor organizer, writes out of a hope born of the 1995 election of John Sweeney as AFL-CIO president, the Teamsters' 1997 victory against UPS and the renewal of ties between organized labor and left-liberal intellectuals. Thus the tone of *From the Ashes of the Old* departs sharply from Aronowitz's earlier and gloomier studies of labor, *False Promises* and *Working Class Hero*.

The optimism remains guarded, however. Much of labor's future, in this account, hinges on its fragile willingness to hear the strategic advice of leftist intellectuals. Aronowitz argues that the long-running attack on working-class standards of living, coupled with the decimation of trade union membership in the private sector, has produced a labor leadership willing to consider radical new proposals.

The changes that Aronowitz advises are apt if unsurprising. As a historian, his calls for organizing in the South, among professionals, among office workers and among the poor gain force from the examples of past failures and successes. Aronowitz argues that without broad political mobilization—beyond workplaces and in alliance with other oppressed groups—unions will see their gains in public sector organizing erode and will leave their members unprotected against capital's export of jobs. Real passion also animates discussion of the need for a daily national labor newspaper and other institutions that could give workers' viewpoints a place in popular culture and political debates. At his best, Aronowitz writes with a sharp awareness of how threats to workers' sense of control over their own labor quickens the desire to organize and create unprecedented opportunities to organize in such sectors as the medical and computer industries.

As healthy as many of these proposals are, *From the Ashes of the Old* promises an originality which it does not deliver. Aronowitz vacillates between arguing that a "party of labor" could find allies to form a "third major political force" and holding that labor might remain in the Democratic Party, asserting its agenda there. But the latter strategy is just what the labor leadership thinks it is already doing. The very abstract sections on labor and internationalism more or less acknowledge that they simply call for a more interventionist version of existing policies. The disastrously compromised

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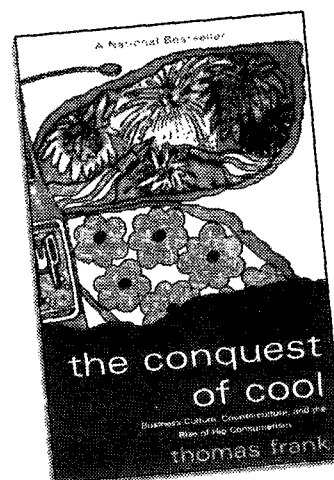
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Deutscher Seeflug, poster, 1926, designed by Walter Hemming. From **Graphic Design From German Modern: Wilhelm to Weimar** (Chronicle).

City, Aronowitz also misses much of the creative local and regional energies that ought to ground our hope. The in-plant resistance strategies of the Staley strikers in Illinois and the inventiveness of Latino drywall strikers and of the Bus Riders Union activists in California in nurturing labor/community ties exemplify this dynamism. So too do the successes in the building of "minority unions" that win gains even in the absence of victories in representation elections by Black Workers for Justice in the Carolinas, the growth in Kansas City and St. Paul of worker-to-worker solidarity visits to Mexican plants and the rise of alternative pro-labor media in the *Detroit News* strike.

Also critical—and virtually unremarked by Aronowitz—is that organized labor is now for the first time a movement composed in its majority of white women and women and men of color. Mere demographics won't shift the unions to a stance of fighting for racial and gender justice overnight, but the yoking of the broad interests of labor to

the narrow interests of white men can no longer function as tragically as it has for most of U.S. history.

It is vital, for certain limited purposes, to follow Aronowitz's lead in detailing the ways in which the crisis of the AFL-CIO has opened possibilities for new initiatives by labor's leaders. But it is also critical to move beyond those limited purposes and to ask what we mean when we talk about organized labor's crisis. Today's AFL-CIO has roughly 350 times as many members as did its predecessor organization in the early 1880s. And yet that organization, virtually without a treasury, paid officials and lawyers and sparked the massive 1886 drive for an 8-hour working day. Much bigger and far less plagued by racial and craft exclusivity, today's labor movement enters the new century vastly stronger than it did this one. In the end, it is in the strength of the working-class movement, and of working people, that will make it possible to bring forward a new society from the ashes of the old. ■

David Roediger is the editor of Black on White: Black Writers on What It Means to Be White and the author of The Wages of Whiteness.

union campaign against NAFTA, which ended with Ross Perot as a spokesman for working people, becomes something of a model for new departures globally.

Too large a part of Aronowitz's hopes and worries rest on major leaders and national events. Although there are occasional bows to the idea that "workers organize themselves" and strong concerns for union democracy, this is a study that generally looks for change to trickle down to the rank-and-file from intellectuals and the union officialdom. At one point, Aronowitz muses on the possibility that the entire course of working-class history might have changed if United Auto Workers head Walter Reuther had lived longer. The impressive account of the galvanizing impact of the Teamsters victory at UPS turns into a post-mortem of Teamsters head Ron Carey's legal travails—and holds that in many ways his defeat brought "union labor back to square one."

Such a top-down approach underestimates the power of a good example and the role of worker-activist groups such as Teamsters for a Democratic Union. *From the Ashes* also repeatedly overstates the extent of pro-corporate views of the general public, missing both the overwhelming support for labor at UPS and the solid backing for the recent General Motors strikes.

Because so many of his examples are national, or are confined to New York

Sexual Healing

By Elizabeth Millard

For centuries, before the phrase took on an aura of possible discovery, like a substance just named but as yet unclassified, "women's sexuality" was considered an oxymoron. The sexual power and freedom of women was

By the Light of My Father's Smile
By Alice Walker
Random House
219 pages, \$22.95

denied by patriarchal forces such as religion, which offered the Eve story as a cautionary tale against self-knowledge, and psychology, which slapped a "hysteria" label on the mind of every unruly, sexually frustrated female.

On a smaller scale, the nuclear family still maintains a double standard for boys and girls when it comes to sexual activity

and education. When the moment of sex-ed home schooling arrives, it's usually Dad who pulls the guys aside to bluster his way through condoms and chivalry, while Mom must take on the topics of reputation, self-defense and, God forbid, pregnancy. Visualizing a father speaking with his daughter about orgasms is like dreaming up a bad new sitcom, in which poor Dad must make do in the absence of a maternal influence. Yet there's a crucial need for a paternal influence on a young woman's growing awareness of sensuality and its pleasures. Aye, as Alice Walker shows in her new book, there's the rub.

In her last novel, *Possessing the Secret of Joy*, Walker explored the savageness of female circumcision. She now moves to a less brutal, but just as prevalent, concern. In *By the Light of My Father's Smile*,

she tackles the wily topic of women's sexuality, and more importantly, the ways in which patriarchy can so thoroughly suppress it. Told by many narrators in a fractured time frame, the story centers around an African-American family's venture into Mexico to study a mixed-race tribe, the Mundo.

Because the girls' atheist father, Robinson, couldn't get funding for the anthropological trip, he poses as a priest, buoyed financially by the church but ultimately crushed spiritually by its teachings. It is this emptiness that leads him to severely punish his eldest daughter, Magdalena, for her wild ways and sensual proclivities. When the 15-year-old girl comes home late one night, Robinson discovers that she has been having sex with her Mundo best friend, Manuelito. Trying to save the child by not sparing the rod, Robinson whips Magdalena with a belt that Manuelito made for her. During the punishment, the younger daughter, Susannah, peers into the keyhole and weeps, not just for her sister, but for the loss of faith in her father. In an ugly scene captured gracefully from Magdalena's perspective, Walker writes:

I did not know until much later that Susannah was outside our bedroom door while Daddy was punishing me. It must have been as incomprehensible to her as it was to me. I knew I had disobeyed him, but he was after all a minister, or at least putting up a mighty show of being one. He'd even gradually graduated from pastor, wearing a plain tan colored suit on Sundays, to priest, and wore black every day. His profession, as he explained it to me and Susannah, was based on the forgiveness of other people's sins.

The whipping erects an insurmountable wall between the father and his daughters. Magdalena is angry about her father's hypocrisy. (He embraces the Mundo way with his own wife by glorying in days of husbandly lovemaking, while continuing to uphold the church teaching he's being paid to espouse when it comes to his daughter.) As the years go on, Magdalena becomes obese as an insulation against the outside world, quietly growing more bitter toward her father. Walker implies that those in a patriarchal

position don't bother to look at what is actually happening to women or what they really need, instead limiting female sexuality to a reflection of male desires.

Susannah, left on the periphery, searches for meaning in her life with marriage, then a lesbian affair, only to find that she's still looking through the keyhole, afraid to claim her body as her own and that sexual pleasure will only lead to a figurative whipping of disapproval. This attitude, while quite unhealthy, does account for some of the book's steamier scenes as Susannah moans her way toward self-fulfillment.

The use of multiple narrators illuminates the punishment incident, giving the reader perspectives from victim, oppressor and observer. Later, that list is expanded as parallel stories from lovers and friends of the sisters embellish the story. They add further shadings of spiritual belief and sexual journeys that draw the sisters down different paths of self-realization. Just as memory is fractured and pieced together slowly from fresh tellings and old wounds, so is

Walker's timeline, which is a swirl of world history, the narrators' personal experiences, and hope for the future, even from the dead.

As the novel opens, Robinson appears as a voyeuristic spirit hovering above Susannah's bed while she has somewhat rough sex with her lover, Pauline. His confusion and sorrow over not truly knowing his daughters is only mitigated after another angel, a Mundo, arrives to show him a way to reconcile with the living. Only in death, when Robinson can no longer defend an impossible moral position, can the family repair its split.

Venturing nearly into New Age spiritual-speak, Walker becomes the champion of Eros and Psyche, drawing readers into a world where the highest wisdom is gained from chucking that old-time religion and adopting a more ancient view of sexuality as the way of finding a higher power. When Magdalena meets Manuelito, she's a goddess of self-love and confidence, free of virgin jitters, full of the tribe's sexually healthy beliefs instead of her father's puritanical teachings. The punishment

DISARMING THE PRAIRIE

TERRY EVANS

with an introductory essay by Tony Hiss

Located 40 miles southwest of Chicago, the Joliet Army Arsenal was once the world's largest TNT factory, surrounded by 19,000 acres of open lands. Inspired by the vision and efforts of environmentalists and Chicago-area residents, the federal government in 1997 created the Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie at the site. Noted landscape photographer Terry Evans captures this moment of transformation, contrasting the decayed monuments of twentieth-century warfare with the pastoral beauty and historic structures preserved within the boundaries of the former installation.

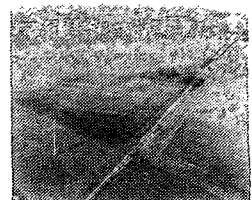
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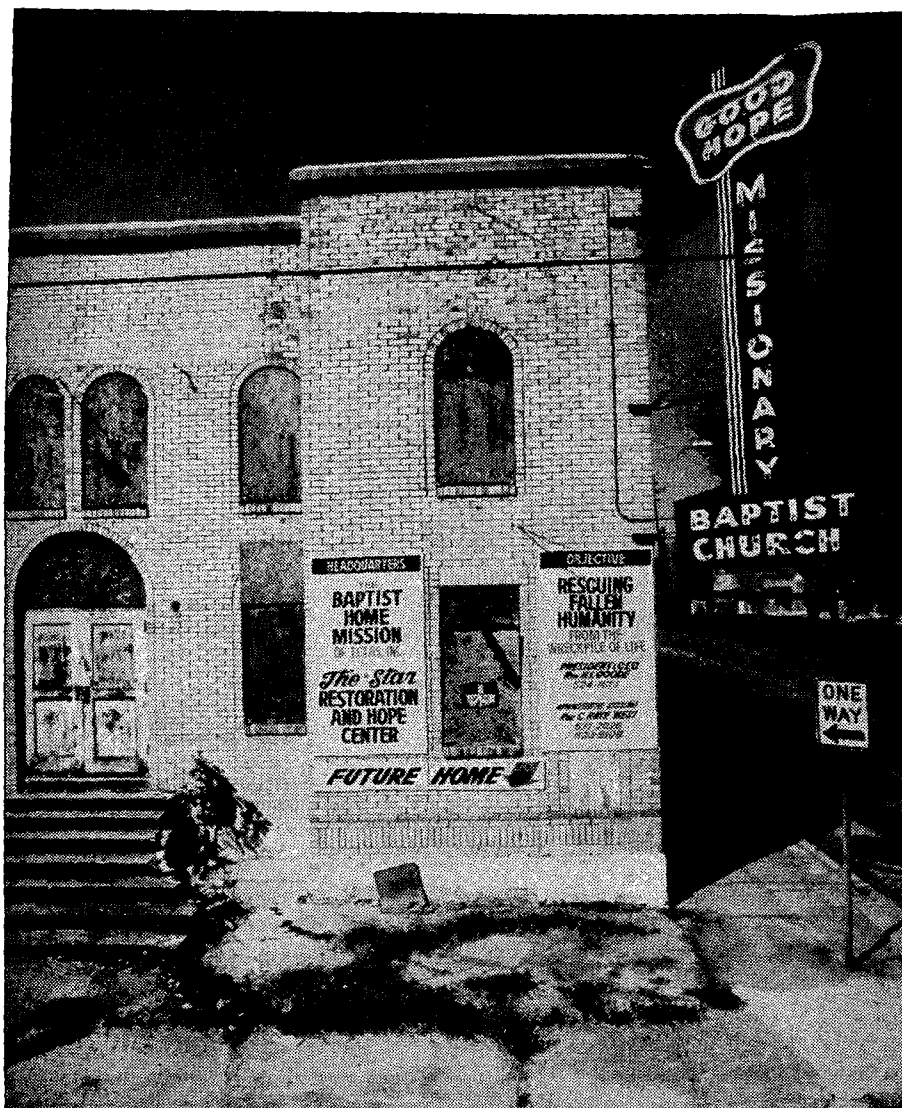
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Good Hope Baptist Church, Saulnier and Wilson, Houston, Texas. From **State of the Blues**, Photographs by Jeff Dunas (Aperture).

she receives is stunningly metaphorical on many levels, representing the treatment of indigenous peoples by Western conquerors, of primitive religions by Christian dogma, and of girls' sensual yearning by their fathers.

Although the book includes many elements that could be considered dangerously overused (the wise and ancient tribe members, a fortune-telling old woman, discussions of goddess worship), her storytelling ability transcends any outward flaws. She creeps to the edge of cliché but manages to make it seem magical, suffusing her characters with an almost unbelievable sensuality and still letting them wisecrack their way through difficult situations.

Walker's only failing is an occasional-ly proselytizing tone as she denounces the false morality of the church and reveres primitive cultures. Yet, she presents an intriguing set of issues: How much responsibility should a father take for his daughter's sexual awakening? If sexuality leads to spirituality, are we getting closer to our more primal and essential way of being through sex? Or are we inventing a different form of religion with as many rules and standards as the beliefs Walker so adamantly rejects?

In American culture, views on sex have become as twisted and stunted as Magdalena's perspective, or as relentlessly interesting as Susannah's, inspiring a deluge of contradictory and conflicting outlets, from hardcore porn to nuanced

erotica and *Cosmo* quizzes. Yet there are those few who see sexuality as a step toward spiritual growth and would honor the simplicity of the Mundo mindset, as described by Manuelito:

We do not believe in heaven or hell; we do not believe in eternal damnation. We believe only in the unavoidable horror of hurting others and of likewise being hurt. Being sorry and not being sorry. Forgiving or not forgiving. Our Story is one that continues only for as long as it takes us to do these things.

In this way of thinking, it's perfectly plausible for a father to sit his young daughter down and discuss recent advances in finding the G-spot or to kiss her breasts and genitals, as Mundo parents do in a premarital ritual. Walker's Mundo tribe urges Westerners to let go of their minds and adhere to the beliefs of the body, to exalt love as a higher plane, to celebrate and encourage sexuality in its many forms.

But even though women's sexuality has yet to be fully accepted, especially by a society riddled with furrowed-brow patriarchal types obsessing over the thongs of White House interns, Walker's Mundo philosophy seems hopelessly Pollyanna-ish. Even after Susannah reaches a dizzying orgasm with the determined Pauline very early in the book, she still has to wade through a swamp of insecurities, not all of which are tied to the punishment of Magdalena. She had always been inclined to be the good girl and please others rather than acting on her desire to be as wild as the Mundo.

By *the Light of My Father's Smile* is a beautifully written, fascinating story, yet it's difficult to fully appreciate Walker's assertion that the damage wrought by badly wielded paternal power can be mended simply by the correct attitude, honoring the moon's cycles, a little father-daughter bonding and a week-long snuggle in bed with a passionate lover. What she does successfully convey, however, is that in the search for spiritual wholeness, sexual joy is a necessary, and delightful, step. ■

Elizabeth Millard is a freelance writer living in Boston.

Gay Cachet

By Jane Goldman

A few years ago, critics saw the future of the Broadway musical, and its name was *Rent*. The play (now touring throughout the United States and Canada), by the late Jonathan Larson, is set in New York's East Village and includes stories of lesbians, black women, gay men, artists, homeless people, people with AIDS, and combinations of those, as well as landlord trouble in a tight rental market. Larson said its plot was based on Puccini's opera *La Bohème*.

But nobody mentioned that its plot was also based on a novel, *People in Trouble*, by Sarah Schulman. It was, and Schulman wrote *Stagestruck* about her discovery and experience with that fact. It's excruciating to read about her fruitless attempts at redress from newspapers, magazines and lawyers—which make up the first third or so of the book—but her real point isn't that

Larson stole the book, but what he did with what he stole.

Because we've been led to believe that people who complain about getting ripped off are usually looking for a fast buck, I should probably mention that Schulman's claim seems close to irrefutable. During the creation of the play, when a friend of Larson's noted the

Stagestruck: Theater, AIDS, and the Marketing of Gay Culture
By Sarah Schulman
Duke University Press
157 pages, \$14.95

similarities and asked if he had read *People in Trouble*, Larson reportedly said, "Yes, I'm using it." Still more convincing, I think, is one little clue: In *Rent*, when a bunch of gay men are together in a room, wristwatch alarms are always going off. Schulman used the same phe-

nomenon in *People in Trouble*. When Schulman wrote the scene, watch alarms really were always going off in crowds of gay men. AZT was prescribed to be taken every four hours, and HIV-positive people had to remind themselves. When Larson (a straight man) wrote *Rent*—a few years later—AZT was being taken every 12 hours. No more watch alarms—except in Larson's play.

The trouble with *Rent*—aside from its larcenous roots—is that it's about experience that is not only borrowed, but misunderstood (to put it charitably). *Stagestruck*, a three-part essay on "Theater, AIDS, and the Marketing of Gay America" is a personal rant about a familiar critique: In our culture, subversives don't get squashed, they get appropriated, reworked and commodified. In the old days, gay people just didn't get represented in popular culture. These days, gay people get represented—but in distorted versions created by straight people to reinforce their own position at the center of the physical and moral universe—and to sell stuff. Schulman makes the alarm-

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ing observation that in the spring of 1997, every prominent play about gays or AIDS was written by a heterosexual.

Larson changed *People in Trouble*. The men who are the main characters are roommates, not lovers. The greedy landlord is black, not white, and the sympathetic tenant is white. The white straight man loses his girlfriend to a black woman, not a white woman, with whom she has a bickering relationship, not a loving, sexually fulfilling one. Not only does all this make straight people the heroes and straight life our normative base, but it performs a nasty sleight-of-hand: Race and sexual orientation don't matter. Bad is bad, says Larson's alteration, and it doesn't matter if the villain is black or white. People are people, and it doesn't matter if they are straight or gay.

And of course, it does matter. White people and straight people have a special place and power in the world. When someone depicts that, as Schulman does in *People in Trouble*, she critiques not just the behavior but the structure that institutionalizes it. When Larson turns around and denies that, as with his clever choice to make the greedy landlord black, he is making a statement that, as Schulman puts it, "Race is but a casting issue." It makes white audiences comfortable: "Rent's strategy allows a predominantly white audience to see themselves as antiracist because they are buying tickets to a show that casts black actors. Yet, they never have to hear about the consequences of race in a black person's life."

Schulman thinks that an important moment in the depiction of AIDS in the popular culture was the release of *Philadelphia*, the movie starring Tom Hanks and Denzel Washington. It was touted as a breakthrough depiction of a person with AIDS, but I know when I saw the picture I was disappointed and

vaguely offended. Schulman explains why: "*Philadelphia* is predicated on the idea that there is no gay community." Tom Hanks's character is portrayed as vulnerable and alone and forced to solicit the help of a straight, homophobic lawyer. "We take a back seat," says Schulman, "while the heroic straight people protect us and defend us." She argues that this is "not only absurd but grossly ahistorical, since the abandonment of people with AIDS by heterosexual society is the most historically significant factor in the

only find true happiness falling in love with a man. And yet the movie was played up in the gay press. We're still all so desperate to see ourselves onscreen that it doesn't matter how we're portrayed.

Schulman's three observations about *Rent* are appropriate to just about every piece of popular culture with gay content: "1. *Rent* claims that heterosexuals are the heroic center of the AIDS crisis. ... 2. *Rent* clearly depicts a world in which heterosexual love is true love. Homosexual love exists but is inherently

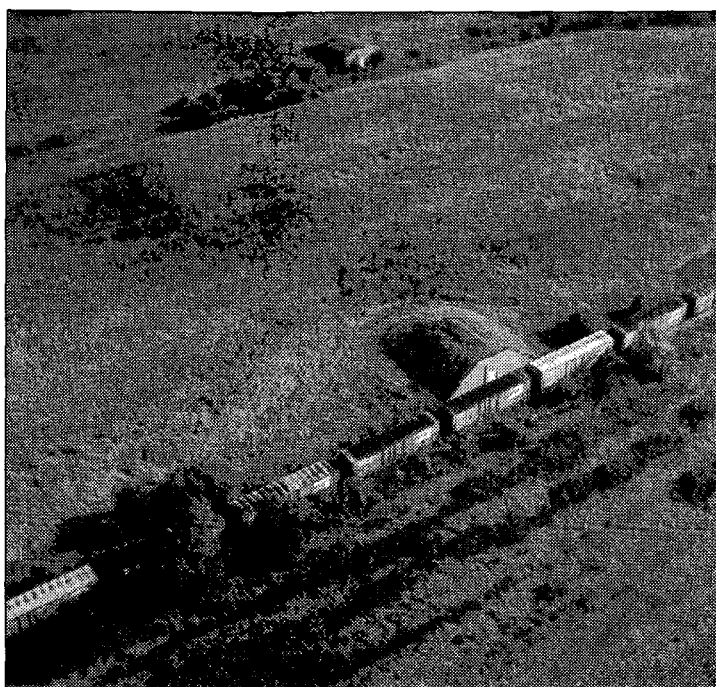
secondary in that it is either doomed or shallow or both. ...

3. The experiences of gay people and people with AIDS are exactly the same as the experience of those in the dominant culture."

In the third section of the book, "Selling AIDS and Other Consequences of the Commodification of Homosexuality," Schulman discusses how mass culture has produced "a straw homosexual and a straw person with AIDS whose definition and desires recreate heterosexuals as 'tolerant' without asking them to give up any of their privileges." Advertising, she says, is a culprit. Gay and straight marketers have colluded to create the definition of queer as rich, white and male. At one point, that seemed to be a good thing for queers: If they see us as consumers,

then maybe they'll treat us better. But the tactic not only lets straight people off the hook and encourages a subtle homophobia (*what are they complaining about, say heterosexuals, they have it better than we do*), but erases the experience of non-rich, non-white, non-male people, encourages gays to aspire to assimilation and cancels out any use of gay life as cultural critique.

In decrying the passing over of gay-made authenticity in favor of straight-made "normalized" homosexual portrayals, Schulman makes what I think is her weakest point: that popular product is pushing aside other, more valuable art. Most of the country simply



Abandoned bunkers and train, now a cornfield, September 1995. From Disarming the Prairie by Terry Evans (Johns Hopkins University Press).

initial escalation of the crisis in the United States."

I get the same feeling when I watch any of the current popular depictions of queers. You might expect mainstream products like the television show *Will and Grace* and the movie *My Best Friend's Wedding* to be propaganda for the dominant culture, but even the less corporate pieces are no better. I remember when *Chasing Amy* came out, the independent film about a guy who falls in love with a lesbian. It got a lot of press as a daring little escapade, but the message of the movie was disturbingly familiar: Lesbians are bitter and neurotically insular, and a dyke can

doesn't have access to the quality queer theater that she compares favorably to *Rent*. In most places, if we didn't have *Will and Grace*, we wouldn't have any homos portrayed at all. There are many reasons why brilliant artists such as Diamanda Galás and Adrienne Kennedy are not widely celebrated, but I don't think it's because Jonathan Larson is taking up the space. American popular culture is all about comforting characterizations, stories in which people may deviate from the norm, but in the end come to their senses and realize that happiness can only lie in heterosexual, monogamous, capitalist, family-oriented, patriarchal lives. We've always preferred simulated feeling to the real thing.

It is dreadful that Schulman was exploited the way she was, but the experience gave her a wonderful opportunity to expose an insidious process: the way critics can be neutralized by impersonating them. ■

Jane Goldman writes from San Francisco about queers, culture and the Internet (together or separately).

Border Crossings

By Gayle Salamon

Precisely because my body can shut itself off from the world, it is also what opens me out upon the world ...

Maurice Merleau-Ponty

Boys Like Her: *Transfictions* is a collective effort by Taste This, a Vancouver-based troupe of young performance artists Anna Camilleri, Ivan Coyote, Zoë Eakle and Lyndell Montgomery.

Though the issue of transgenderism runs throughout many of these tales, it would be somewhat misleading to characterize this as a book about transgenderism. It reads instead as a powerful, if occasionally uneven, collection of stories, photographs, poems and ruminations about border crossings of all varieties: national, genre, spatial, generational, all emerging from very differently gendered perspectives.

Zoë charts the four young queer artists' respective positions on the unstable map of gender: "Ivan's always been a girl's boy and Anna's always been a boy's girl and Lyndell's always been a boy, period. I have never been completely comfortable

Boys Like Her: *Transfictions*

By Taste This (Anna Camilleri, Ivan Coyote, Zoë Eakle and Lyndell Montgomery)
Press Gang Publishers
224 pages, \$15.95

with any label." Yet things are not quite that simple here. Lyndell, Ivan and Zoë all linger in the uncertain gaps between "boy" and "not boy," "girl" and "not girl." The roles of gender as they are explored here are never able to promise anything as flatly declarative as a period at the end of a sentence. "It's a hard place to put

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Despite over \$25 billion expenditures since "The War Against Cancer" was launched by President Nixon in 1971, cancer rates have escalated to epidemic proportions while there has been little, if any, significant improvement in the treatment for most common cancers in spite of continuing misleading hype by the cancer establishment — the National Cancer Institute (NCI) and the American Cancer Society (ACS).

THE POLITICS OF CANCER Revisited, by internationally renowned authority on cancer causes and prevention Samuel S. Epstein M.D., backed by meticulous documentation, charges that the cancer establishment remains myopically fixated on damage control — diagnosis and treatment, and basic genetic research with, not always benign, indifference to cancer prevention research and failure of outreach to Congress, regulatory agencies, and the public with scientific information on unwitting exposures to a wide range of avoidable causes of cancer. NCI and ACS are also accused of pervasive conflicts of interest, particularly with the cancer drug industry.

THE POLITICS OF CANCER *Revisited*

By Samuel S. Epstein, M.D., recipient of the 1998 Right Livelihood Award (the Alternative Nobel Prize)

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your finger on," Zoë says, "and that's just fine with me."

Charting this terrain is sometimes joyous, as in "No Bikini," Ivan's story of the blissful, shirtless summer at age 6 spent passing as a boy at the Lion's Club pool. And it is sometimes terrifying, as seen in the story, told four times from each writer's perspective, of being stopped and searched by police at the Canadian border. The telling and retelling of that incident structures the book, a tale of interrogation and invasion that emphasizes the real dangers that accompany gender transgression.

In this volume, labels of "girl" and "boy" and "he" and "she" are used, strategically misused, taken up, turned around and put back down again. The point is emphasized that these categorizations are necessary even when they do not quite fit, even when they chafe. "If there are no words to describe what she is, then maybe she does not exist at all," Ivan writes. And Lyndell notes in "Plastic Pearls," a short piece about winning a game of "Guess that Gender" during an outing to the opera: "Sometimes a label is more comforting than none at all. Whether I am read as a gigolo, a pre-pubescent lad, a man-hating dyke or a lesbian, something is better than nothing. I don't always have the energy to explain myself."

And these labels have force, have real effects. The "sex change" that Ivan describes in "No Bikini" is accomplished solely through an accidental passing, through the misapplication of a gender label. Perhaps the collection's most moving piece, "Sweet Boy," is a fragmentary conversation of sorts between Anna, Lyndell and Ivan, which explores the exhilaration and pleasure that can accompany the taking up of a label that is offered:

"What solace it seems when you lift my real name from inside me like this and say it aloud, sweet boy, you are such a sweet boy."

"It brings me wings just to think of it, this is the truth as I know it to be."

"She knew she was not a boy; she had been made painfully aware of this already. Of this there could be no doubt, she had been told too many times."

"Boy. It breathed life into my lungs. I was to her what I was not to others looking in and on. I was a boy to her. How to describe the comfort of hearing you call me this name?"

Running through all of these works is a central concern with embodiment, the repeated and insistent question of how it feels and what it means to experi-

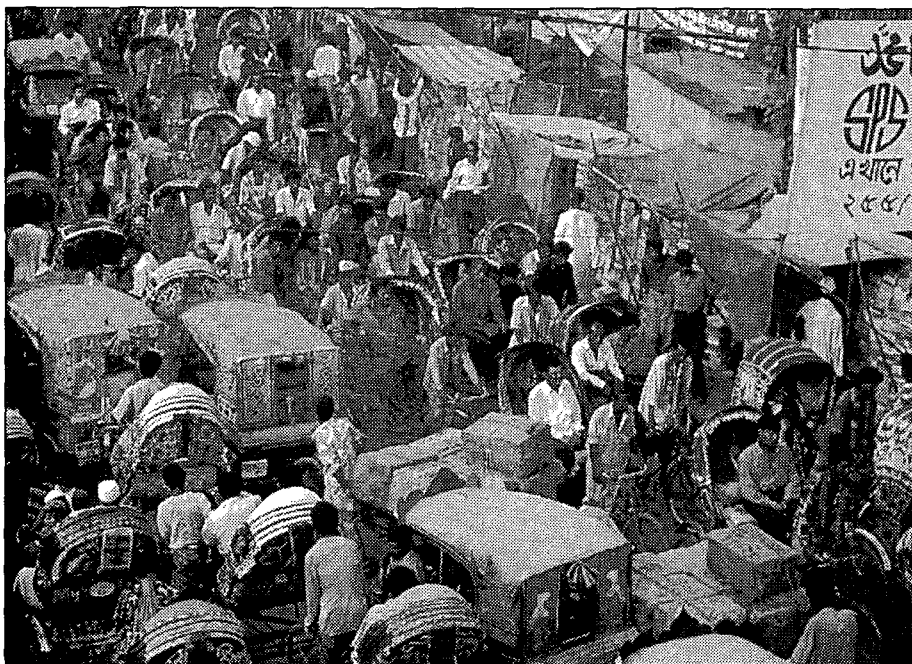
ence the world in and through one's body. The most interesting moments come when the very different answers to this question play off one another, when the authors' differing experiences of what it means to be young and queer come together as a loose conversation about gender and embodiment. In "Skin to Scar," a story about facial reconstructive surgery after an unspecified trauma, Anna finds redemptive power in her newly made self: "I grew these bones myself, muscle to tendon, skin to cheek. I pushed myself into this world and this is magic."

Charted here, too, is what happens when the world pushes back. Anna's "Incarnadine" and Zoë's "Broken Bread" are harrowing descriptions of sexual abuse and the attempts to come to terms with its effects. In both works a sense of self and identity is recovered and affirmed through the body. A glimpsed reflection of her body in a mirror, and a deliberate submersion in her body's capacity for pleasure, returns Anna to herself. For the female-identified Anna, her body is what allows her to affirm and celebrate her own identity, an anchor which contains a "truth" of her. "They have always had a private story, she and her body," and it is a story both of secret trauma and of the emergence of a self which survives and overcomes that trauma.

The story that follows, "Quick Fix," offers quite a different delineation of the body and its relation to the self. Ivan describes the painful experience of first getting his period at age 18, in what is also a tale of bodily trauma, but one that has its origins inside the body in question. And this is when the differences among the portraits is at its most striking: the portrait of a body that holds and offers a truth of what one is, placed next to a portrait of a body that is not the truth of what one is. For the male-identified Ivan, his "truth" is exactly what the contours of his body fail to capture or show. In this case, the body attempts to keep Ivan firmly under the sign of "female," a betrayal of his identity.

The bodies and stories offered in *Boys Like Her* emerge as sites of both painful exposure and jubilant revelation. ■

Gayle Salamon is pursuing a Ph.D. in rhetoric at the University of California, Berkeley.



From **Chasing Rickshaws**, Text by Tony Wheeler and Photographs by Richard I'Anson (Lonely Planet).

One Pill that Shook the World

By Cathy Mason

In 1993, a leading British journal characterized the oral contraceptive pill as one of the seven wonders of the modern world. Certainly, as the popular icon of the "sexual revolution," the birth control pill embodied unprecedented reproductive choice and altered sex and gender relations forever. After nearly 40

an oral contraceptive. In 1951, she finally found an enthusiastic and wealthy patron in Katharine McCormick, the daughter-in-law of Chicago entrepreneur Cyrus McCormick. They enlisted the aid of biologist Gregory Pincus, who saw the potential for an oral contraceptive in recent experiments on steroidal hormones. In turn, he found Boston gynecologist John Rock, who was willing to conduct clinical trials of the prototype. After further trials in Puerto Rico and Haiti, the first oral contraceptive—manufactured by Searle Pharmaceuticals under the name Enovid—was rushed to the market in 1960. Despite brand names, the new wonder drug instantly became known as "the pill."

Interestingly enough, the earliest ad for Enovid in a medical journal alluded to Andromeda breaking free of her iron chains, symbolizing a woman "unfettered" from the binds of procreation. In fact, Watkins writes, the pill was a "technical solution to a social problem," which embraced and embodied the modern dependence upon technical innovation and placed the physician in control of the patient's fertility. Ironically, it was mostly men who controlled this potential boon to women's reproductive freedom. Though the pill is remembered as a popular icon of the sexual revolution, at first doctors and patients viewed its proper use as a reliable method of family planning for married women.

The appeal of the "complete separation of contraception from intercourse," ultimately inspired a change in behavior. But Watkins rejects the pill as a catalyst

of the "sexual revolution." In a credible, if cursory, characterization of the liberalization of sexual standards during the period, Watkins points out that it was not until the '70s that sexually liberated unmarried women started using the pill in large numbers. Yet, because the author relies upon statistics rather than historical context, she explains when the drug was used and who used it, but not why it became so prevalent.

Critical in Watkins' account is the changing dynamic between doctor and patient over the course of the decade. Women patients' trust in the authority of male doctors faltered as the media began to focus on the pill's more serious side effects. At the same time the pill was first enjoying widespread use, the health hazards of long-term oral contraceptive use were finally being made public. In the most carefully researched and thought out section of the book, the author presents the debates among physicians and scientists, the media and the public, and finally the government and regulatory agencies over the consistently increasing number of health concerns associated with the drug. Each group had a stake in the future of the pill, and the ensuing Senate hearings on the safety of oral contraceptives revealed their often conflicting objectives.

With 6.5 million women on the pill by 1965, minor side effects soon escalated into serious neuro-ophthalmological and blood clotting disorders, along with

On the Pill: A Social History of Oral Contraceptives, 1950-1970
By Elizabeth Siegel Watkins
Johns Hopkins University Press
208 pages, \$25.95

years of hype and controversy, the pill remains the most widely used birth control method in the United States.

What Elizabeth Siegel Watkins calls the contraceptive "revolution" is ably chronicled in her scholarly study, *On the Pill*. From the inflated hopes for the pill's impact on world population growth to its influence on the emerging feminist movement in the '60s, Watkins uses the story of the drug to evaluate the implications of medical science in modern life.

When Margaret Sanger opened her first (illegal) birth control clinic in Brooklyn in 1916, she dreamed of a "perfect" contraceptive method that would be accessible to and administered by women. After the first wave of American feminists won the vote in 1919, many women activists turned to the formerly taboo issue of contraception as the next most pressing issue facing women. For its proponents, birth control became a symbol of personal freedom just as the vote had represented political freedom.

But through the next several decades, contraception was hardly a topic of general conversation and didn't rank as a priority in drug research. But Sanger, a life-long advocate for birth control (she coined the phrase) and the founder of Planned Parenthood, had witnessed first hand the appalling results of unrestricted childbearing on poor women and their children. She tirelessly canvassed philanthropists and scientists to help develop

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increasing concerns about the pill's possible link to breast and cervical cancers. The media presented differing sides of the escalating debate over the significance of these risks and called for more information. Journalist Barbara Seaman's 1969 book, *The Doctors' Case Against the Pill*, brought the matter to a climax the following year, instigating Sen. Gaylord Nelson's hearings into the health risks of oral contraceptives. The book expressed the misgivings of some physicians about the harmful side-effects of the pill and introduced feminist and consumer concerns over the way it was distributed by pharmaceutical companies and doctors.

When the Senate consulted only doctors, scientists and drug manufacturers in their public inquiries, activists sought media attention to voice their more pointed criticism of the corporate-fed, male-dominated medical profession and its indifference to women's health. The high-profile feminist group, D.C. Women's Liberation, went so far as to hold alternative hearings on the pill and to invite testimony from a wide range of political and personal voices (including Seaman, who was not invited to the Senate inquiry). Although unanimous in their call for comprehensive disclosure about the risks associated with birth control pills, each side had its own ideas about what that meant and how to achieve it.

Beyond Seaman's published findings, neither set of hearings yielded much new medical information, but the often

alarmist tone of media coverage of the event heightened public fears over the drug's safety. The FDA hoped to ease this problem and diffuse the more radical demands of women's health activists by mandating an information insert in pill packaging. This only inspired dispute over the extent and content of the information. Eventually, a simply worded warning about the possible danger of blood-clotting disorders from long-term use was inserted into pill packages.

Despite the inconclusive outcome of the pill debate, it was merely the first skirmish in the ongoing negotiations between medical science and the public over informed consent. While use of the pill continued almost unabated, the women's health care movement that grew in the wake of that debate has ensured better options in medical care. Even limiting the list to fertility matters, the subsequent controversies over intrauterine devices, Norplant, Depo-Provera, RU-486 and abortion demonstrate that no technological solution can ever again be regarded as simple or comprehensive.

In contrast to Bernard Asbell's recent sprawling and lively contribution to the same subject, *The Pill: A Biography of the Drug that Changed the World* (1995), Watkins opts for a concise account of the development of the drug and its effect on middle-class American society during its first decade of use. Unfortunately, Watkins too often relies upon statistical evidence and consensus

experience at the expense of the rich contextual detail that would have made for a more readable survey. Furthermore, although Watkins traces the evolution of discussions of oral contraception from moral and social concerns in the early '60s to debates about its adverse health effects in the late '60s, she never fully evaluates "the commonly held assumptions about the impact of the pill," and does little to demonstrate her claim that the use of the pill resulted in "far different consequences than its developers intended." Still, the work's emphasis upon primary sources to chronicle the emerging awareness of the pill's side-effects and the issue of "informed consent" in the development of the women's health movement makes *On the Pill* an important resource for anyone interested in the social history of the era.

Watkins rightly concludes that "the pill serves as a barometer of changes in attitudes toward science, technology, and medicine" throughout the '50s and '60s. Although the controversy over the pill's safety remains unresolved, the debates over its use and distribution in those years established a vocabulary for women's health advocates and consumer activists. The doctor/patient relationship and attention to women's health needs have progressed greatly in large part due to our experience with the pill. ■

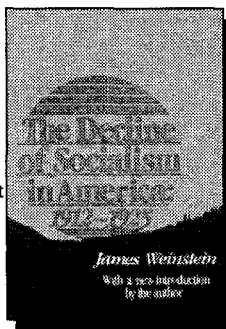
Cathy Mason is a historian and writer specializing in cultural and women's history.

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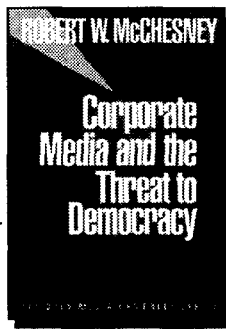


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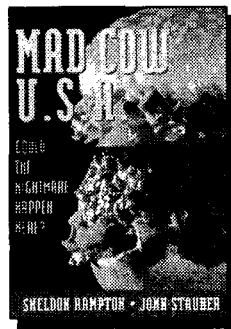


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The Remaking of a Counterculture

By Jackson Lears

Few genres are riskier than utopian writing. Few are more easily parodied, dismissed or dated. Social criticism, in contrast, can more readily stand the test of time. Consider Marx's work. His critique of bourgeois exploitation can still set the pulse to racing: the entrepreneur conjuring whole populations out of the ground, closing up the pores of the working day, squeezing the last ounce of surplus value out of the proletariat. But his utopian vision—the dictatorship of the proletariat and the withering away of the state—leaves one cold. This is not just because we know how horrifically things turned out: The vision lacks the concrete force and weight of the critique; it seems formulaic by comparison.

Still, social critics since Marx have continued to risk utopian speculation. The impulse is understandable, especially in the United States—where complaint is un-American (a form of European pessimism) unless one is prepared to affirm some alternative proposals. The result is a hybrid genre, a blend of empirical critique and utopian longing.

For 30 years, Theodore Roszak has been a leading practitioner in this field. His *The Making of a Counter Culture* (1969) brilliantly captured the ethical and philosophical significance of the

broad social movement that has since been dismissed as mass narcissism. Roszak recognized what recent critics have forgotten: The countercultural stance was a serious form of resistance to the technocratic mentality behind the nuclear arms race and the Vietnam War; its intellectual origins lay in the romantic critique of

America the Wise: The Longevity Revolution and the True Wealth of Nations

By Theodore Roszak
Houghton Mifflin
272 pages, \$25

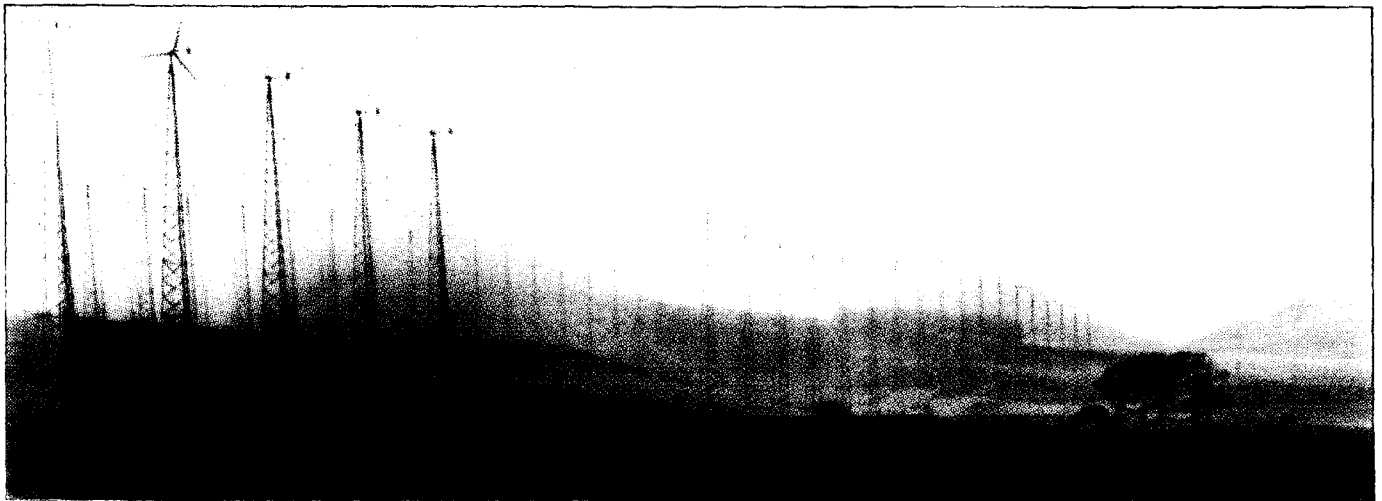
denatured rationality, ranging from William Blake to Allen Ginsberg; its communitarian politics drew strength from a long anarchist tradition.

Roszak himself disdained countercultural cant, rejecting rosy scenarios of psychedelic liberation. But he dismissed any overriding concern with political and economic structures as a clanking, mechanistic relic of the Old Left. For him, as for many less thoughtful observers of the era, class conflict had been replaced by generational conflict. Though the young were easily misled, in Roszak's view they remained our strongest hope for a more humane culture.

Everyone knows how quickly that hope died, how smoothly countercultural gestures were assimilated to hip consumerism. Within a very few years of its publication, Roszak's paean to hippie consciousness began to seem painfully dated. Despite its clear-eyed assault on the "myth of objective consciousness," *The Making of a Counter Culture* failed to construct a convincing alternative. Roszak's critique of existing realities proved more powerful than his agenda for change.

Now Roszak is back, chastened by advancing age and a near-fatal illness, but still outraged by managerial inanity and full of utopian yearnings. *America the Wise* is a revealing sequel to *The Making of a Counter Culture*. Like the earlier book, it contains much hard-hitting social criticism: Roszak reveals the grotesque distortions behind the neo-conservative assault on "greedy geezers," skewers the mass-media obeisance to the 12-year-old male mind, and attacks the corporate-sponsored technophilia that "heedlessly strips the planet of its riches and its dignity as if there were no tomorrow." Roszak has produced another powerful critique of contemporary public discourse—its triviality and moral emptiness, its indifference to the deepest needs of actual human beings.

Yet in its attempt to envision a utopian alternative, *America the Wise* ultimately falls flatter than its predecessor. To oversimplify (but only a little), Roszak's argument runs like this: The growing per-



Kahua Ranch Wind Farm, Hawaii 1990. From *No Ordinary Land: Encounters in a Changing Environment*, Photographs by Virginia Beaman and Laura McPhee (Aperture).

centage of old people in the American population could create an unprecedented cultural transformation—could foster a more nurturant caregiving ethos, a more faithful stewardship of the earth, an appreciation for social interdependence and cultivated leisure, a transcendence of competitive striving and status anxiety, an acceptance of aging and death—in short, wisdom. Old people have always possessed wisdom but soon they will have the numbers to make it stick. There will not only be more of them, they will be healthier and more active than ever before. Demography is destiny, or so Roszak hopes. Despite his acute perception of our current plight, and his admirable desire for a more humane set of dominant values, he has little else to say about how we get from here to there. As usual in this genre, the passage to utopia stays foggy, especially by comparison to the clarity of the social critique.

Roszak is at his best in unmasking managerial evil. He effectively takes on the foolishness of Peter Peterson and other crusaders against the Gray Peril—that swelling mob of old people whose appetite for entitlement programs supposedly threatens to bankrupt the public household. Peterson and his Concord Coalition, Roszak writes, have embarked on “a remarkable campaign that would have people believe that balancing the budget is more important than providing medical care for their parents—or, at some point in the future, for themselves.” Even from a narrow accounting perspective, the campaign is misguided; Roszak observes that in the coming decades “the total dependency load—youth dependency taken together with retirees—carried by each working member of society will actually grow smaller,” thanks to the smaller number of children under 14.

But the larger point is that in the absence of entitlements, the dependent population would not simply go away, and a much heavier burden of elder care would fall on middle-aged children who are already stretched to the limit by the demands of leaner, meaner employers. Entitlements, Roszak writes, “are the arrangement we have made as a society for pooling a collective moral obligation and discharging it as practically, dependably, and fairly as possible.”

Roszak deftly dissects many corporate-

sponsored fatuities. He ridicules intergenerational distrust promoted by mass media: the persistent worship of youth, even in the face of its declining demographic significance; the growing insistence on “productive aging”—a perpetual elderly Olympics—as the only alternative to senility. With convincing

The '60s generation is the one everyone loves to hate, whose members themselves often collaborate in public rituals of self-flagellation. How refreshing to find someone celebrating old hippies again.

passion, he argues that the nihilism of cyberpunk fantasy reveals a fundamental truth about the future according to Microsoft: Blake's dark, Satanic mills have become sleeker, cleaner “corporate campuses,” but they are still Satanic. Temples to technology in the service of power, they help to create a world where all experience seems to be mediated electronically, and feelings of helplessness are fed with *Robocop* fantasies of technetronic omnipotence. The sadistic posturing of rock groups like Nine Inch Nails, however repellent, speak to an understandable longing in their audience—a desire to feel “something real” amid a host of virtual realities.

Given this bleak picture, one is entitled to ask: What is to be done? Roszak's answer is even simpler than it was in 1969. Then, he placed his faith in the ragged army of the young, just coming of age amid the antiwar counterculture (though he admitted they might need some mature advice from time to time). Now that the “'60s generation” is facing old age, Roszak is willing to bet on them again. OK, so

they didn't change the world the first time, he seems to be saying, they still have another shot—if only through an accident of demographic history. Their longevity and numerical dominance will give them an unprecedented opportunity to influence cultural values, perhaps in part by resurrecting the countercultural emphasis on “quality of life,” but mostly by translating the wisdom of age into a transformative social agenda: shorter work weeks, guaranteed annual incomes, more reliable environmental protection, a more flexible attitude toward gender roles, even a more complex and rewarding popular culture (no longer attuned only to adolescent fantasy). Sounds great! Sign me up!

There is, to be sure, something truly bracing about an argument that so completely turns conventional wisdom on its head. For years now the punditocracy has played endless variations on an intergenerational theme: how the self-indulgence of the baby-boomers has corroded the American moral fabric (especially in contrast to the Virtuous Ones who went before, wading ashore at D-Day and saving the world single-handedly). In the wake of Clinton's peccadilloes, and amid the Republican putsch, the moralizing has hit an unbearable pitch. The '60s generation is the one everyone loves to hate, whose members themselves often collaborate in public rituals of self-flagellation. How refreshing to find someone willing to celebrate old hippies again.

The problem is that Roszak's argument remains unconvincing, mostly because, despite his critique of the intergenerational model, he keeps a foot inside it. To be fair, he does not claim unique virtues for the '60s generation: He acknowledges the possibility that they will be tempted from the path of wisdom by the lingering attractions of the alpha-male role, or by vendors hawking promises of perpetual youth. He also acknowledges that succeeding generations could embrace a similar transformative social role, as members of the burgeoning population of active, engaged senior citizens. But he announces his real focus from the outset: the “New People” who came of age in the '60s and who are now confronting

the aging process at a crucial historical moment, the beginning of the "Longevity Revolution."

These phrases exude the aroma of pop sociology, but I am willing to grant Roszak "longevity revolution." That at least refers to a discernible historical phenomenon. "New People" is pure showbiz; it recalls the silliest posturing of the '60s ("There's a new generation/With a new explanation") and it places a red herring in the path of anyone who wants to think seriously about the relationship of increasing longevity to cultural values. The longevity revolution, according to Roszak, "has given this remarkable generation the chance to do great good against great odds." Well, maybe. But why pose the opportunity in generational terms? This not only perpetuates the divisiveness Roszak elsewhere deplores, it also overlooks the political and economic obstacles to creating a more humane culture.

No one could deny the profundity of the needs evoked by Roszak, or the capacity of old people to enhance our understanding of those needs—the need to sit still, to blend work and leisure, to contemplate and practice the arts, down to and including the art of dying. "You can't take it with you," we say. Maybe more of us could learn to mean it. But merely living gets more expensive all the time. What's to persuade affluent or even modestly fixed old people to redistribute their wealth downward, through the kind of taxation a guaranteed annual income for all Americans would require? How is such a proposal to be born (let alone survive) in our present political climate? And if such a proposal were to pass, how would its redistributive policy affect the people George Will reverently refers to as "the investing classes" (most of whom, incidentally, are over 50)?

Despite Roszak's emphasis on generational politics, class interests remain the crucial unexamined constraint on public discourse. Americans have long been willing to discuss just about anything in order to avoid mentioning class conflict. Usually we talk about racial issues; sometimes we talk about intergenerational tensions. Eventually, as Roszak's book shows, we even talk about death. Anything rather than face the real abyss. Marx would be amused. ■

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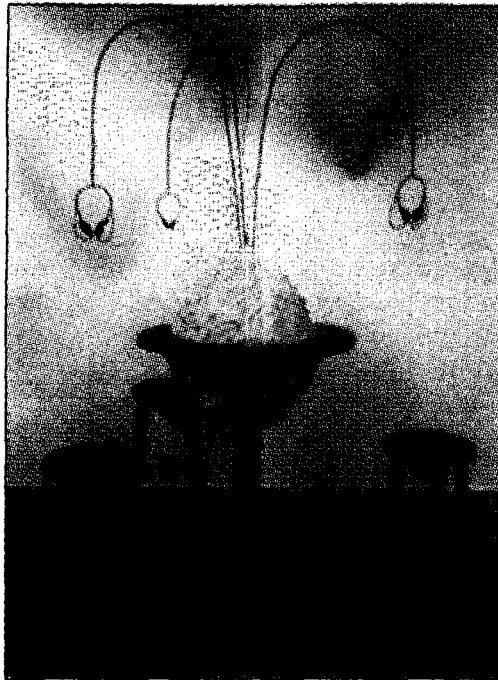
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undeniably weakening. Neoliberal rhetoric aside, he writes, "Without strong states, there can be no relative monopolies, and capitalists will have to suffer the negatives of a competitive market." Where would Lippo have been without Suharto? Or Boeing without every president since Truman? And yet the most famous variety of anti-statism comes from the global economy's elites themselves, whose snowballing self-interest in promoting a laissez-faire orthodoxy outweighs their historical, collective wisdom to the contrary.

If in fact a kind of golden opportunity is unfolding with each new market crash and hurricane, then the obvious question is, what do we do? Wallerstein's prescription is complicated and, unsurprisingly, incomplete. It involves creating democratic, non-profit "extrastate structures" that act as economic producers and bypass the state and corporations. But his ultimate plan remains uncharted: "In this search for substantive rationality ... one thing we have on our side is human creativity." *Thanks for nothing, Immanuel*, might be an initial reaction. But he has little interest in setting one up for disillusion. Been there, done that—with either pathetic results (Timothy Leary) or outright disaster (for starters, the Khmer Rouge). Not that planners and wonks don't have their place, but when wielding a brush as broad as Wallerstein's, the answer lies within.



In the pink at *The Amorphous Body Study Center*

Which brings us back to the pink goo at *The Amorphous Body Study Center*. For all that exhibit's emphasis on social bodies drinking and touching and listening, it is a paradoxically inward event. Like talking on the phone, or even writing an old-fashioned letter—in the end one is still solitary.

Neither Stereolab nor Charles Long explicitly subscribe to Wallerstein's ideas, though their work tends to arrive at a confluence. Rock critics especially like to assign Stereolab an ideological cubby-hole. (Usually the category is "Marxist," meaning that some songs seem to be aware that there is a thing called capitalism and it sort of sucks.) Tim Gane, who with Laetitia Sadier is the group's principal songwriter, recently told the music magazine *Magnet*, "[Our music is] more about having an awareness of those ideas and using them to take a critical view of things. It's not a missionary point of view. I don't think we would be doing the kind of music that we do if we were interested in passing on a straight message to people."

The kind of music they do is difficult to characterize. It began with a thrift-store mentality, using early synthesizers (they helped bring on the moog revival) and old samples, often from the '60s, in combination with the droning sensibilities of indie guitar rock. With a little dada futurism in the mix, the group was—still is—a hit with the college crowd. Around the time of the *Amorphous* exhibit, their songwriting got more intricate and decidedly jazz-influenced. Today, they sound nothing like they did when they

started. But the eclectic mix of instruments, influences and retro-future imagery have stayed—along with the confounding political patterns in the lyrics.

The songs from *Amorphous* (newly reissued as part of *Aluminum Tunes*, a round-up of the group's non-LP sundries), pose questions but, like Wallerstein, finally decline to spell out full solutions (which have a bad habit of becoming "final"). Opaque images of bodies going through space, autonomously singular yet in sticky clumps, seem to drip from one song to

next, just as the music itself occurs in bubbling spurts of moog noodling and guitar strumming. In one song, the singers repeat "*de la déliquescence, la cohésion sociale*" ("of the absorption, the social cohesion") over and over again to a continuous web of strings and mallet percussion. They broach the subject insistently, only to formally propose nothing.

Better hints of their agenda can be had by excavating the group's full repertoire. Patterns of anarchist conviction ("Neither god nor master" is how one song goes) stand along with seemingly contradictory, socialist-sounding critiques of boom-and-bust cycles. Apathy is also frequently disdained.

But ultimately, is it productive to demand from philosophers (Henry Kissinger, for example), and especially artists (Sonny Bono), a leadership role? Such a position scares the hell out of the better ones. Faced with the last century's worth of history in particular, what rational person can blame them?

Amorphous declares, "What we are experiencing now is that the self is joined to various networks of selves and is projected and thrives within a chain of bodies." That's an accurate description of an individual's everyday experience with telephones, e-mail and the rest—which doesn't have to be such a bad thing, as many whine. To be sure, the public realm is in doubt, but is not necessarily being replaced by the cruel, techno-libertarian future envisioned in the pages of *Wired*. If anything, the one-to-one relationships among people can be made more numerous, more intense. The social fabric is in trouble, but elsewhere there are independent associations held together not by the force of law—or even arms—but the bubblegum of ideas or specific needs.

Such as? Well, on the right you have virulently anti-tax homeowners' associations, which in places like Los Angeles are often more powerful than school boards and other local governments. These are the hostile defenders of the rent-a-cop future of Mike Davis' nightmares. On the other hand, elsewhere you've got radical bands of organized squatters and local food co-ops, without which many people would be on the street or hungry. More typically, ordinary volunteer groups and churches fill a vacuum created by a state that is neither trusted nor particularly responsive. Like it or not, the public sphere is reconfiguring itself. For the better? That remains to be seen. As members of the public, we have a say. ■

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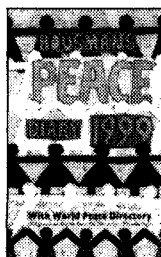
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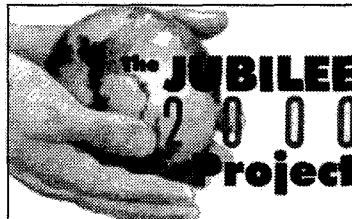
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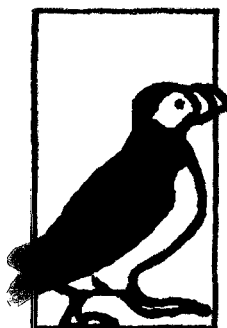
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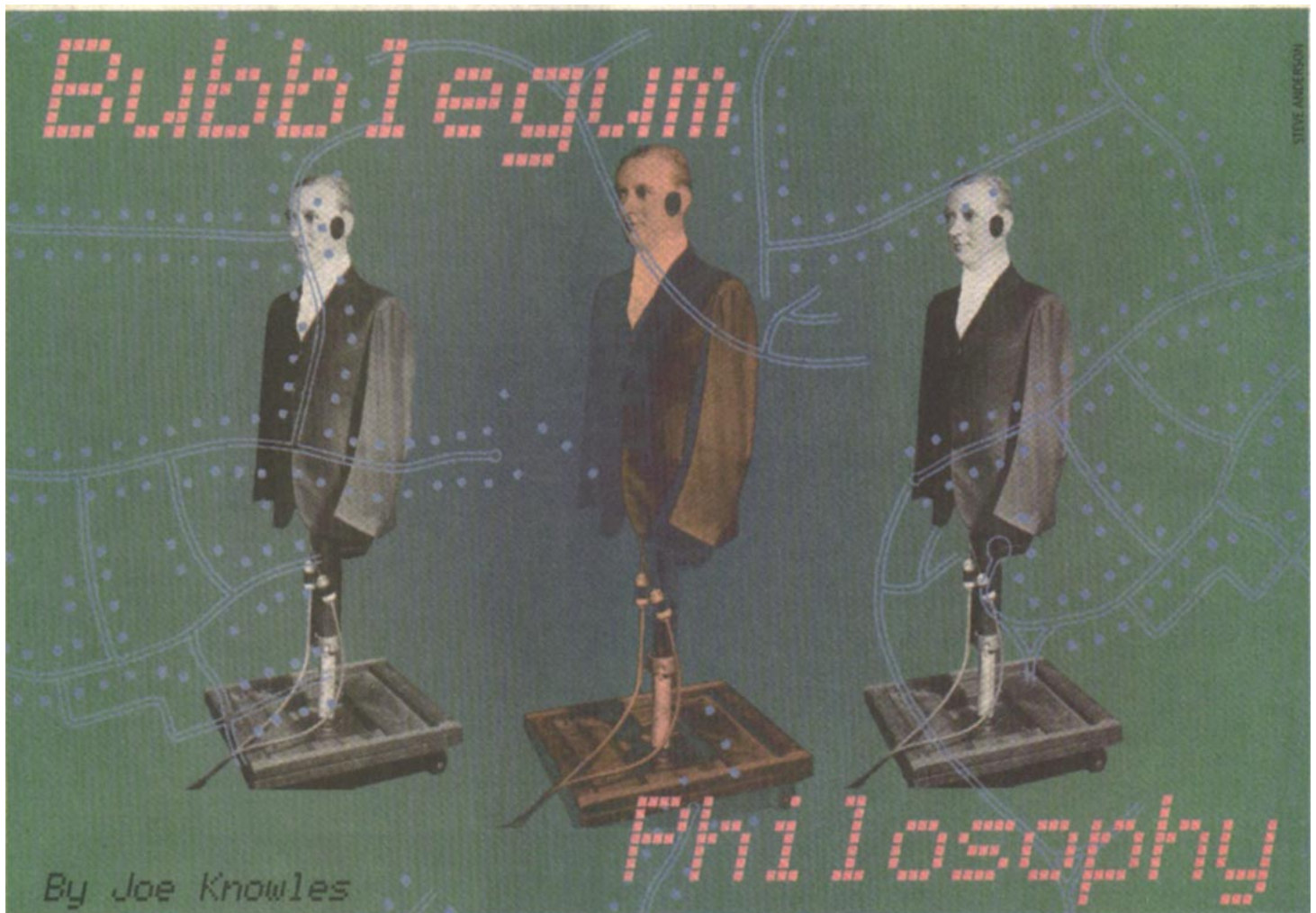
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In 1995, American artist Charles Long debuted *The Amorphous Body Study Center* at a gallery in lower Manhattan. Among the exhibition's several bright, pliable sculptures were a shimmering mass resting on a water-cooler; comfy floor cushions surrounding a pair of blue blobs; and an enormous "bubblegum planet," 280 pounds of pink clay freely shaped by the gallery's visitors. Sprouting from these creations were wires and headphones, distributing the whirs, blips and la-la-la's of Stereolab, the Anglo-French pop group, to all those plugged into the goo.

According to the *Amorphous* manifesto, the purpose of all this lounge-like physicality—sight, touch, drink, sound—was "to emphasize the new role of the body as prescribed by the rapid developments in communication" and to ask, pointedly, "what is the role of the public body?"

That's a good question. The body, mediated by phone, fax, pager, e-mail and the like, is more isolated than it ever has been (at least in the first world, where such technology is widely available). As for the public body, it is in disarray, pummeled by a neoconservative assault on all things civic. In groping for an answer to Long's question, itself amorphous, we can start by considering its roots. They are laid out with finesse by social critic Immanuel Wallerstein in his new essay, *Utopistics: Or, Historical Choices for the Twenty-first Century*.

Flashback to the barricades of 1968. From Mexico City and Paris to Chicago and Prague, the world experienced spectacularly brief flare-ups against all varieties of imperial might. According to Wallerstein, this fleeting crack in The Man's

authority was a notable marker in the timeline of the "modern world-system" that has governed the global economy for the past several centuries.

Not because 1968 energized the left—hardly, as that is where one can trace the beginning of its current fragmentation—but that the various riots and demonstrations sowed the seeds for a prevailing suspicion of state authority. In the past 30 years, Wallerstein writes, we find "a widespread and amorphous anti-statism, of a kind totally unknown in the long period between 1789 and 1968." Those dramatic events foretold a loss of faith, in other words, in government's ability to make things better. And thus apathy held sway—concomitant with neoconservatism's phoenix-like rise.

But before we lament voter apathy and defend what is sneeringly called "big government" yet again, consider Wallerstein's word "utopistics," which he made up. You may sigh at his obtuse coinage, but the invention is useful for getting around the tricky exercise of envisioning utopia. His concept of "utopistics" instead describes a method for assessing the paths ahead, considering the "substantive rationality" (his favorite phrase) of "alternative possible historical systems."

And "the historical system" we're in is on borrowed time—a new one, as yet undetermined, is around the corner. Wallerstein argues that the relentless logic of the "endless accumulation of capital" is at last facing a final profit-squeeze and all-too-material environmental consequences. While we've heard that before—and capitalism keeps on chugging—his case remains strong, given that traditional nation-states are

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